THE

LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor : R. PALME DUTT

Volume 17 December, 1935 Number 12

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Notes of the Month

AFTER THE ELECTION R. P. D.

British Foreign Policy

R. PAGE ARNOT

Why We Broke with the I.L.P.

C. K. CULLEN

Henri Barbusse

ANDRÉ MARTY

Book Reviews Index to Volume 17

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against

WAR & FASCISM

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D. NAYSMITH, J.P., (President, Portsea Island Co-operative Society).

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(2) The Prospects of the Common Front against War and Fascism after the General Election.
(3) The Armaments Industry in Portsmouth and Southampton.
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NOTES OF THE MONTH

The General Election—A Contrast—Optimism and Pessimism—A Soldiers' Battle—Caught Unprepared—Why the Government Won—Brighton Labour Party Conference—Unity Shelved—Unity and the Election—The Failure of Leadership — Belated Corrections — The Fatal Defensive—The Issue of Dictatorship—The National Government and Fascism—Labour Apologetics—Re-armament—The Miners' Struggle—"No Basic Difference"—Gallacher's Victory—The Lesson of the Elections — The Fight for Unity

THE sharpest awakening should go through the working-class movement in the face of the result of the General Election. There is no need to exaggerate the extent of the Government's victory, which bears within it already the signs of its future defeat. It is true that the habitual distortion of the parliamentary system has given the Government the illusory show of strength of an overwhelming parliamentary majority on the basis of 54 per cent. of the votes—the distortion reaching such an extent that in Scotland an actual anti-Government majority is represented by a minority of the seats. It is true that the total working-class vote of the Labour, Independent Labour and Communist candidates combined, has slightly exceeded the 1929 record and reached nearly 39 per cent. of the votes against 37 per cent. in 1929. All this is of the greatest significance for the future and for the line of direction, as is also the approach towards extinction of the Liberal Party. The fact that, even under the most unfavourable conditions of leadership and programme, the workers have thus been ready to rally to the fight, is a big thing. But this very fact is an indication of how much more could have been achieved by a real leadership and fight. What matters is that a very small additional increase through a real leadership of the fight could

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have defeated the National Government. What matters is that after six years of world crisis and depression without parallel the working-class vote should be almost stationary. What matters is that after four years of extreme reaction and hostility to the working class the National Government should still have been able to obtain a majority and should now be entering on a new lease of power for the decisive period ahead. All this makes an extremely serious situation which will now have to be faced, and the lessons of which need to be drawn without delay for the future struggle.

CONTRAST for a moment the position at the beginning of the year in order to measure the significance of the present election. At the beginning of the year the National Government was at the height of its unpopularity. The mass revolt was rising against it, sweeping all barriers aside, forcing the Government to retreat. Parliamentary forms were compelled to yield to open mass struggle outside. Labour Party forms and bans were compelled to yield to elemental mass forces. The very leaders who had solemnly excommunicated any form of association with Communism found themselves forced to speak on the same platform with Communists, Bevin with the Communists in South Wales, Attlee with the Communists in East London. The united working-class front was growing up in action. Here was class struggle. Here was the united front. What was the effect of all this on the electoral fortunes of the Labour Party ? The by-elections of this period, at Wavertree in February, and at Norwood in March, showed. The Labour vote shot up above the 1929 level. On the fateful day of February 6, the day of the Government's retreat, even a substantial 1929 Conservative majority at Wavertree dissolved into a Labour majority. All political observers are agreed that had a general election taken place at this point, the National Government would have been swept aside and an absolute Labour majority would have been well within the bounds of possibility.

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TURN to the summer of 1935. By this time the shackles of class co-operation were again strangling the movement. The unity with the National Government in the Jubilee had done its work. Already even the Liberal press commentators were beginning to note the defeatism of the Labour Party leadership, who had no thought of defeating the National Government or achieving a Labour Government. It will be remembered how the political correspondent of the *News-Chronicle*, A. J. Cummings, wrote at this time:

> One must deplore the shameful spirit of political defeatism which has overtaken the Labour Party in this country. One day last week a group of Labour leaders in London were discussing with an air of patient resignation the prospect of returning 170 Labour representatives to the next Parliament. That was the maximum calculation. I should have thought that the mere normal operation of the Party machine, coupled with the narrowest swing of the political pendulum, would ensure a Labour representation of at least 200.

That was in June. By that time the Labour Party leadership, on the basis of its policy of class co-operation replacing the militant advance of the beginning of the year, was expecting with "patient resignation" only 170 representatives at the General Election. The Liberal political expert was calculating that even the normal "swing of the pendulum" should ensure at least 200. The result in November realised only 154. Even the pessimism of the summer was revealed as too optimistic in relation to the final outcome. This is a measure of the disgrace which the result of November represents.

WHAT had happened by November? By November, the retreat of the summer had turned into a collapse of all independent fight and leadership, exemplified in the disgraceful tailing behind the Government on the war situation, such that the outcome in the election could have only been a complete debacle, had not the soldiers' fight of the rank and file, the degree of unity achieved in spite of bans, and especially the class struggle of the miners, partially saved the situation, in spite of the leadership. In the months before the Election the reactionary ruling section had established complete control. The campaign for working class unity, sweeping

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forward in the other leading countries with corresponding wholesale electoral advance, was spurned and trampled on: In August the *Daily Herald* editorial "Poles Apart," proclaimed the wrecking stand: in October the Labour Party chiefs were leading and organising the disruptive minority in the Second International against unity, blocking the will of the majority for international unity, and threatening to split their own International rather than permit unity. In September, the *Daily Herald* editorial "Voice of Britain" was acclaiming Hoare: "irrespective of party, irrespective of domestic conflicts, the overwhelming majority of the nation stands firmly behind the Government." The war resolution at the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party Conference was carried through without permitting the inclusion of any section criticising the the National Government. The Labour Party Conference was rushed through on the basis of this war resolution, sidetracked by a discussion of abstract pacifism, and with no discussion of the real issues facing the movement. The National Government took them at their word and with tactical correctness called the Election at this point.

CAUGHT in the very act of a common front with the Government by the sudden blow of the Election, complaining with naïve bitterness of the partisan unscrupulousness of the Government in thus exploiting "national unity" for its own purposes in an "unwanted election," the Labour Party leadership entered the Election in sorry plight. They could not at a moment's notice switch over their whole tune from solidarity with the Government to extreme criticism of the Government and all its works without inevitably creating the impression of conventional and unconvincing platform tirades for electoral consumption. They entered the election denouncing unity, denouncing the class struggle, denouncing Communism, vowing that they were as devoted to the Constitution as Baldwin and quoting Baldwin's contemptuous pat of praise to the Labour Party as their best testimonial, vowing that they would maintain armaments as efficiently as the National Government, vowing that they would maintain the national

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finances as efficiently as the National Government, protesting that the existing economic recovery was not the special merit of the National Government and would not be injured by their coming to power, and in every respect appearing, not as the leaders of a rising class proclaiming war without truce on the National Government and the whole capitalist order for which it stood, but as pale and ineffectual counterparts of the National Government, seeking to carry forward the same type of policy with a slightly more progressive colour.

IN these conditions the result was inevitable. Between the real leaders of capitalism and their pale and vacillating understudies, the bulk of the electorate chose the more solid and substantial body as the more likely to be capable of delivering results on the existing capitalist basis. Only in the areas where the class struggle predominated, where trade unionism was strong, where the united front was established in spite of bans, above all where the miners' offensive for direct battle against capitalism overshadowed all issues, only in these areas in the main the fight went against the National Government. Thus the demonstration of the beginning of the year was reinforced by the experience of November. Where in February the policy of class struggle and unity in action, sweeping past the Labour leadership's bans, turned even a Conservative majority of 1929 into a Labour gain, in November the domination of the official policy of class co-operation and denial of unity failed even to win back one-half of the Labour seats of 1929. Never was there a clearer demonstration of two paths and where they lead, even in terms of the narrowest electoral calculations. And it is the lesson of these two paths that now needs to be drawn for the future.

IN order to come closer to the lesson of the election and the present problems of the working-class movement, it is necessary to bring sharply into view the Labour Party Conference at Brighton, which immediately preceded it. The Labour Party Conference at Brighton was in fact overtaken by events, by the rapid development of the Italian war on Abyssinia

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which began in the same days as the Conference, and then immediately after by the General Election. The consequence is that this Conference has not yet received anything like the attention from the working-class movement that it requires or that in any other year it would have received. The necessities of the united fight in the elections held over consideration of the issues raised by the Conference. Yet with the election over, it is necessary to come back to these issues ; for in them is to be found no small part of the explanation of the weakness that was subsequently revealed in the election.

THE Brighton Labour Party Conference was stage-managed in a way without parallel in any previous Labour Party Conference. Burning issues were before the Labour Party, issues of working-class unity, of international unity, of the fight against the National Government, of the coming election. These issues were never even discussed. The whole limelight, alike of the Chairman's speech, and of the debating, was turned on the single controversy over the question of League sanctions in connection with the Italo-Abyssinian war. This controversy was utilised to thrust the other issues out of consciousness. And even this controversy was so framed that the real issue, the question of the fight against the National Government, was kept out of the picture and excluded from the resolution, while the opposition was made to appear to turn on the confusion of the issues by the line of extreme pacifism and of the Socialist League. The result was a complete unreality of the whole proceedings. The only recorded division revealed a minute opposition of barely 100,000. To all appearance there was unity without equal. Yet this show of unity was completely artificial and unreal, was based on suppression of the real issues, and concealed an actual policy of disunity which was never faced and discussed. The appeal of the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International for working-class unity, which was shaking the working-class movement and the Socialist Parties all over Europe, did not exist for the Labour Party Conference. The rôle of the Labour Party leadership in leading the disruptive minority *bloc* in the

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Second International against unity was never discussed. The fight against the National Government and the fight in the coming elections was never considered. From the standpoint of the party managers, anxious to bury every vital issue, the Conference was an ideal Conference. Its real consequence was immediately after visible in the elections. The Labour Party went into the elections unprepared, taken by surprise, without having established the essential basis of working-class unity, without having prepared the fight against the National Government. The result was a result which meant that a cheap victory had been given to the National Government.

THE first need of the working-class movement in every country to-day is unity. The Brighton Labour Party Conference turned a blank wall on unity. Immediately after the Conference, Morrison was engaged in denouncing the Communists as " political crooks " (*Forward*, October 12, 1935.) Then came the election. The Communists were in the front ranks of the fight for a Labour victory. All over the country Labour candidates were publicly acknowledging and welcoming the help of the Communists. An unofficial united front grew up in the work of the election, even though its value was heavily weakened and limited by the official policy of the Labour Party. It is noticeable that in those regions where this unofficial united action was most marked and open, as in London and the mining areas, the Labour gains were most marked. But what an enormous gain and stimulus to the whole fight could have been achieved, had the unity of the working-class forces been proclaimed on the eve of the election. On the contrary, what was the attitude of the central Labour leadership to this co-operation? They turned the fight against the Communists, even at the expense of weakening the election front. When the National Government Ministers and the capitalist press took the offensive and denounced the " Communist-Labour alliance," did they stand up to the attack and answer that they were proud of the unity of the workers in the fight against capitalism and the National Government? On the contrary, they fell over

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themselves to apologise to the bourgeoisie, to deny all connection with the Communists, to denounce Communism. By this they played into the hands of the National Government's aim of disrupting the working-class front, and preferred the favour of the bourgeoisie to strengthening the election fight. This was the first weakness of the election campaign.

NO less disastrous was the strategic leadership of the fight. If the whole working-class was to be rallied, if a majority of the electorate was to be won, the first necessity was to direct the fight towards the decisive aims of power, to sound the call for the defeat of the National Government and the formation of a new Government which would fulfil the will of the workers. But until the very last days of the campaign, when the pressure from below compelled a partial change, this note was never sounded. What was the note sounded by the leadership during all the earlier decisive stages of the campaign? "There was going to be a big dramatic increase in the representation of the Labour Party in the House of Commons" (Morrison, at Edinburgh on October 19). "Labour would have a very big number of members in the next parliament" (Attlee, at Fulham Baths on November 1). "We are going to do very well in this election: if our people go on as they are and make the supreme effort that is necessary, the Party will do very well" (Morrison, in *Forward*, November 2). Throughout, the aim is set as an increase in representation, not as the issue of Government. The psychology of defeat, of permanent opposition. As late as November 6, the *Daily Herald* front page declared in large type:

> Labour headquarters now (!) regard the situation with a real measure of optimism (!). If the last ounces of enthusiasm and effort are thrown into the fight, the Party managers believe that startling and dramatic victories can be won in many constituencies.

Still no issue of Government.

DURING all these weeks the Communists were alone in proclaiming in the front plan the aim of defeating the National Government and returning a Labour

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Government to fulfil the united workers' demands. Only as late as November 7, when the direct Communist criticism of the Labour defeatism on the question of Government was being driven home with increasing working-class support, the *Daily Herald* editorial at last came out with a different note, admittedly in response to criticism, under the title " Fighting for Power " :

> Let there be no mistake about it. Labour is out to win this election and to get rid of this Government. . . . . It is out to win power. It is ready to take office.

This belated correction and concession to criticism came only in the last week before the poll. And it was ruined by the immediately following declaration :

> To-day, Labour is as ready for office as in 1929.

Thus, the aim of a fighting Labour Government to fulfil the workers' demands was replaced by the aim of a MacDonald Labour Government and the repetition of the hated memory of 1929-31. Could such an aim be expected to arouse enthusiasm ?

IF the strategic leadership of the campaign was thus dominated by the defeatism, passivity and scepticism which ruled at Labour headquarters, the same spirit permeated the entire official propaganda. The first necessity of a victorious propaganda campaign was to take the full offensive against the National Government and capitalism and for the aims of the workers' struggle. But the most startling feature about the campaign was that, despite the attempts of more or less hackneyed tirades about the National Government's record, in the main fight, day by day, the National Government was ceaselessly taking the offensive against the Labour Party and the Labour Party leadership was continually on the defensive and replying to attacks. Not only that, but the main burden of the fight was that the National Government was continually attacking the Labour Party on the grounds that it could not be trusted for the purposes of capitalism, and the Labour Party leadership was no less continually replying that it could be trusted, and that in 1924 and 1929 it had proved itself trustworthy. Such was the curious character of the fight which on this ground could only end in the victory of the National Government.

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THE National Government ceaselessly accused the Labour Party of designs of "dictatorship" to realise socialism, and at the same time openly held out the threat of a future fascist dictatorship to counter any socialist offensive, and insolently declared that "democracy was on trial" (*i.e.*, to be accepted or not, according as it maintained capitalism or not).

> In this Election *democracy itself is on trial.* (Baldwin broadcast, November 8.)
>
> *Dictatorship could never come in this country until* there were revolutionary threats from the Left. The people had in their bones that love of law and order that would make it impossible for them to submit to a dictatorship of the Left. (Baldwin, at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, November 4.)

Observe: "impossible to submit to a dictatorship of the Left" —but not of the Right.

> You told me yesterday that you feel there is some doubt in your constituency about the attitude of myself and of the Conservative Party towards Fascism, and I should like to make my view perfectly clear.
>
> I have declared again and again my faith in our system of free democratic government. I believe that our democratic institutions will serve us as truly and efficiently in the future as they have done in the past. *Fascism and dictatorship in any form could only come* through a breakdown of our democratic system. Where they have come abroad they have been created by fears of extreme forms of Socialism and Communism. (Baldwin, letter to Captain Hudson, National candidate for North Hackney, November 5.)
>
> The baser elements in the Labour following, inflamed by the wild and whirling language of their platforms, are in many cases trying to shout down those whom they cannot answer. It is a reminder that dictatorship lies in the very soul of Socialism. It was precisely this Bolshevik application of mob law that made *Fascism the only hope for Italy.* (*Observer*, November 10, 1935.)

The open threat to democracy of all this language from the bourgeoisie sounds louder and louder throughout, and was one of the most significant features of the election.

COMBINE this with the repeated threats of a financial crisis in the event of the return of a Labour Government.

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> The advent to power of the Labour Opposition . . . . would inevitably be followed by a collapse of confidence. (Government Election Manifesto.)
>
> The mere prospect of having a Socialist administration in office pledged to such measures would absolutely shatter the confidence on which all our progress has been built up and would bring about a crisis in which business would at once stop dead. The first thing to happen would be that tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands of people would be thrown out of employment. (Neville Chamberlain at Cardiff, on November 4.)
>
> If the country returned to office a Government pledged to take over the industries of the country and conduct them on socialist lines, all business would immediately come to an end. . . . . There would be a crisis ; confidence would be completely shattered, and all new enterprise would stop absolutely dead. (Neville Chamberlain at Stockport, on November 8.)

The line is clear. Democracy (*i.e.*, parliamentary democracy, capitalist democracy) is to be tolerated so long as it works in the interests of the ruling capitalist class. If a Labour Government should attempt any measures, or even be suspected of the intention to attempt any measures, however constitutionally (" the mere prospect of having a Socialist Administration in office pledged to such measures ") not in the interests of capitalism, then the ruling capitalist class will immediately exercise its economic power to let loose a financial and economic crisis and make the system unworkable. If the Labour Government does not immediately surrender or collapse, as in 1931, but should attempt to strengthen its powers in order to cope with the crisis (in accordance with the recipes of the Socialist League), then it will be immediately accused of dictatorial attempts, and fascist dictatorship is openly proclaimed by the responsible leaders of the bourgeoisie as their answer and intention in such a situation. This is the line of the bourgeoisie to-day openly proclaimed in Government Ministers' speeches during the election.

NEVER was there a more open, direct, challenge to the working-class majority of the country and to the elements of democracy. How did the Labour Party leadership meet this challenge ? Did they fling back in the

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teeth of the Government the charge of dictatorship? Did they expose the real dictatorship of the City of London and of all the monopolist interests which enslave the people, and which are openly ready to use every weapon, if necessary, to flout any parliamentary majority? Did they accuse the National Government of its rule of shielding Fascism with police and lawcourt protection, and of its open threats of future Fascist dictatorship? On the contrary. They contented themselves with sheep-like bleating that they were innocent of the charge preferred against them by the National Government, that they were not really plotters against democracy, that "equally towards the dictatorial ideas of Fascism and the dictatorial ideas of Communism, Labour's attitude has been one of unremitting hostility" (*Daily Herald*, November 6, 1935), that they were as profound and devout believers in democracy as Baldwin himself. This pitiful subservience reached its lowest depths in such a typical document as the Election Address of Clynes (which is in general well worthy of study as an expression of the policy of the Labour Party leadership and, incidentally, contains no mention of any socialist aim whatever and as its furthest left reaches to a criticism of the "private ownership of land"). Here the declaration of Baldwin on May 22 is prominently set out:

> The Labour Party as a whole has helped to keep the flag of Parliamentary Government flying in the world in the difficult periods through which we have passed. From the first day they have taken their part as His Majesty's Opposition and have equipped themselves for debate after debate and held their own and put their case.
>
> I know that they stand in their heart of hearts for our Constitution and for our free Parliament and for what has been preserved in the world against all difficulties and against all dangers.

Bootlicking servility could hardly go further than this attempt to present to the electorate the workers' representatives with a certificate of approval from the boss.

SIMILARLY on armaments. The National Government accused the Labour Party on the grounds that it would fail to maintain armaments efficiently. The Labour

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Party leadership replied that it would maintain armaments as efficiently as the National Government.

> Labour, while working for disarmament, will maintain efficiently such armed forces as are required to enable this country to do its duty in the League and to give security against aggression. (Attlee, Election address for Limehouse.)
>
> The Labour Party, no less than the Government parties, recognised the necessity for maintaining defences at the highest point of efficiency. (Citrine at East Woolwich, November 8.)

Morrison went one better and insisted that the Labour Party would maintain armaments more efficiently than the National Government :

> If it be true that our defence forces are inefficient, then the Government has once more proved itself utterly incompetent, and the sooner it is replaced by a sensible, businesslike and effective Labour Government, the better. (Morrison broadcast, November 7.)

To appeal to the electorate to replace the National Government by a Labour Government in order to maintain armaments at a higher standard of efficiency might be regarded as an attempt to add to the humours of the election, but could hardly be expected to lead to any result save to strengthen the support for the National Government.

TURN to the other side, to the issues of the workers' struggle, which should have provided the strongest basis of the Labour fight and of the offensive against the National Government. Here the miners' offensive, coinciding with the election and leading the way for the gathering forward movements of the workers in all the main industries, placed the ball at the feet of the Labour Party leadership. That ball was never played. Did a single outstanding Labour Party leader unequivocally pledge the Labour Party to fight for the miners' demands and, if returned, to secure the miners' 2s. ? No such pledge was given. The language remained the vague language of sympathy. Within three days of the poll on the day the miners' strike ballot began, the *Daily Herald* came out on November 11 with an editorial on " Mines and Votes," which declared that " a national coal strike would be a grave

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crisis," and concluded with a section entitled "Labour Proposals":

> A vote for a Labour candidate will mean a vote to put in power a Government that would forthwith make strike action unnecessary.
>
> Steps will be taken at once to compel the creation of proper negotiating machinery and to see that the miners receive a prompt instalment of the long delayed justice for which they have called in vain to the National Government.
>
> And there will be no strike.

In place of a pledge to fight for the miners' 2s. there is only vague talk of negotiation for an "instalment." There is only one specific pledge—and that is against a strike. This is on the very day that the miners were balloting for strike action by an overwhelming majority and the Miners' Executive was giving the lead to vote for strike action. The Labour Party leadership was publicly separating itself from this stand, and taking common ground with the National Government in making the averting of a strike the main issue.

WITH such a line of the official Labour policy and progaganda in the election it is not surprising that the more thoughtful sections of the capitalist press should complain of the difficulty of finding any important difference between the policies of the two parties on the main actual issues. In this respect the comment of the leading financial organ, the *Economist*, on "A Quiet Election," in its issue of November 16, is worthy of note:

> The election campaign has generated little fury and less than normal sound. Throughout its course rival candidates have been distinguishable chiefly by their varying emphasis on particular items of policy, whose main topics—peace, support of the League of Nations, stimulation of domestic recovery by public works, and improvement in social services—have figured in greater or less degree in the programmes of all parties.
>
> Is this blurring of the old and crude party divisions a passing phase, due to the tactical situation at the moment, or is it a sign of a more permanent change that may in time react on the whole party system? Is it due to the accident that the election is taking place at a time of relative internal prosperity? Or does it mean that the old issues have in fact become less important and that no new ones have taken their place?

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> At the moment it certainly seems as though the latter were the true explanation.

It is noted as a fact in the opinion of this financiers' organ (which would normally be sensitive on such matters) that the "class-war" disappeared from the election:

> In other directions, also, sharp dividing lines are tending to become blurred. "Class warfare," for example, has played little part in the present election. . . . . Again, "nationalisation" is losing such appeal as it ever possessed, whether as a gospel or as a bogey. . . . .
>
> Altogether, the lesson of the 1935 election may well be that the common ground between the parties is of more permanent importance than the issues which divide them. And this prompts the question whether the nation is working towards a new political order in which, from a wide and common centre, the balance will shift now to the Right, now to the Left, instead of swinging from one extreme to the other? There is much that is desirable in such a development.

From the standpoint of finance-capital there may be "much that is desirable in such a development." From the standpoint of the working class the opposite is the case.

IN these conditions it should be no matter for surprise that the Labour advance was not greater at the election. The result of the election should be taken, not as cause for disheartenment any more than for futile congratulations on the winning back of less than half the ground of 1929 that should never have been lost, but as the strongest warning and pointer of the line that must be followed in the future if victory is to be won. That under the most unfavourable conditions of leadership and programme eight-and-a-half million workers should have nevertheless rallied to the fight is a tribute to the stubborn strength of the rising army of the workers. Further, certain outstanding results, such as the overwhelming rout of MacDonald at Seaham alongside the triumphant return of Gallacher for West Fife, are beacons for the future. The old forces are going down to their appointed end. The new forces are rising. The ground for Communist advance is now incomparably stronger than it has ever been in Britain, and the example of Gallacher in Parliament will spread a new awakening of what the revolutionary working-class fight means.

B

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BUT the lessons of the election fight of 1935 must be learned. The National Government, installed for a new lease of power, will advance to even more extreme reaction than in its first term, will carry forward its rearmament programme at the expense of the workers, and will carry forward its imperialist policy of war abroad. At the same time the situation is developing for heavy industrial struggles in Britain. The election defeat will intensify this advance of the workers to the direct struggle against the employing class. Everything now depends on bringing the whole strength of the Labour movement into this fight. The Labour movement can only advance on the basis of the class struggle, or fail in proportion as this basis is denied. That is the main lesson of the election campaign. The miners' offensive now comes before all else. The responsibility falls on the General Council to organise the combined advance of the workers who are putting forward their programmes of demands in the main industries, at the same time as it will be necessary to defeat the approaching new attempt of the Government to impose the revised scales of the Unemployed Assistance Board, held secret during the election, after their rebuff at the beginning of the year. The fight against the National Government goes forward beyond the elections to new forms.

SECOND, the whole question of working-class unity must now be faced. This is the condition of further advance and future victory. The co-operation of the Communist and Labour workers in the election was a step forward. But that co-operation was one-sided and weakened owing to the opposition of the Labour Party leadership. That opposition must now be overcome. This is no less important in the international field. The key to international working-class unity lies in Britain. The old disruptive rules and regulations, dating from the leadership of MacDonald, in the Labour Party and in many of the trade unions must be rescinded. The decisive next positive step to working-class unity lies through the affiliation of the Communist Party, maintaining its programme and outlook, as the voice of the rising militant section

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of the working class, within the Labour Party. This can be achieved through a new understanding and support within the trade unions and within the local labour parties. The Labour Party will need to take stock anew of the whole future position, to draw the lessons of the 1935 elections, and to face the issues that were not faced at the Brighton Labour Party Conference. The period till the next Conference in October is a long period in the present urgent situation ; and there is strong need for a Special Labour Party Conference to review the lessons of the General Election and the new situation now opening, and to take the necessary decisions for the future.

R. P. D.

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BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY

By R. PAGE ARNOT

IS there a new foreign policy?

Will one result of the General Election be a sudden swing of the Government away from the League of Nations into new pacts and understandings?

These questions have been raised in some quarters; and during the Election Government spokesmen such as the Foreign Secretary were at pains to deny any pending change in British foreign policy. In a sense Sir Samuel Hoare was right: for not only is the policy of the National Government continuous over the last four years, but in certain fundamentals there is a continuity in British Imperialism's policy that goes right back to the end of the last war. Nevertheless, there has been a transformation in the World situation: and adaptations of "continuity" to this transformation must be in one direction or another. "Continuity" too, has its crossroads. Especially in these last years more than one cross-road has had on it the signpost "To War." It is because of this that the rearmament proposals of the Baldwin Government are a dreadful menace to the working class. It is the policy behind rearmament that is the biggest danger.

What is that policy? The question might seem an easy one: but it would baffle most writers in the press to give a clear outline of British foreign policy. The platitudes of Cabinet Ministers give no clue. Are not intended to give a clue. And even when they utter statements intended to deceive, they have none of the resonance of a flat lie.

The citizens of the Soviet Union understand the Soviet peace policy, not in its main principles only, but in its methods and their detailed application. They know the relations with the capitalist countries and which are the most, and which the least, hostile. The Frenchman has a definite notion of what the foreign policy of the Republic is supposed to be, however much he may suspect the statesmen who are charged with carrying it out. The same is the case in America. In fascist countries, whatever the masses may think, there is no doubt as to the open war-mongering foreign policy which the Government in both Germany and Italy set forth with brutal clarity.

But the average middle-class Englishman, if he sets himself to find out what is his Government's foreign policy, can learn little more about it than the phrase in the King's speech: "My relations with foreign

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powers continue to be friendly." Therefore, the first fact about British foreign policy is that *there is no knowing what the British Government will do.*

Observers from the Continent see more of the game: and their vision is unclouded to the extent that they habitually discount a large percentage for hypocrisy in the speeches of British statesmen. But they too have been deceived often enough: the classic instance being the belief of certain German diplomats in British neutrality in 1914—at the very moment when the old lion was crouching to spring at Germany's throat. And so into the calculations of all the other Imperialist Powers who never know for sure what Britain will do, there enters an element of deep mistrust. Innocents who do not know this are naïvely astonished when they find that their favourite statesmen whom they regarded as utterly honourable English gentlemen whose word is as good as their bond ("you know you may safely trust me"—Baldwin, November, 1935), are from time to time alluded to in the European and American press as though they were an unsavoury gang of double-crossing diplomatic crooks.

But the general low repute of British statesmen in other countries (hardly to be offset by occasional rare items of praise—which alone are reproduced in the British press) is not very important. What is of the utmost importance is that foreign imperialist powers are filled with uncertainty and, knowing they cannot reckon on British Government promises from one week's end to the next (as when the United Agreement of Stresa had hardly been solemnly affirmed when the British double-crossed their Allies with the Anglo-German Naval Treaty), try to offset this element of *uncertainty* by increasing their armaments.

At home the National Government were enabled last month to win the General Election largely because their real foreign policy was kept dark and because of the failure of both the right and left leaders of the Labour Party to expose that policy and to give a clear lead.

This experience should make plain the necessity of a clear understanding in the working-class movement of the chief factors in the moves of British imperialism: such an understanding should prevent both the acceptance at their face value of foreign office statements; and also sudden belated "discoveries" of a "new foreign policy."

While the whole question cannot be completely dealt with in a single article, there are some essential points that can be cleared up: and since it was the question of the Italian war on Abyssinia which proved the stumbling block to many Labour leaders, it will be well to begin with this.

When Fascist Italy took a step to precipitate world war by its attack on Abyssinia, the British Government moved in the League of Nations to apply the Covenant in prevention of aggression. This step seemed

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entirely at variance with its previous policy. The British Government had done more than any of the big imperialist powers belonging to the League to weaken the League's potentialities as a factor for peace.

It was the British Government which had emasculated the League by preventing any action against the treaty breaking and aggressive war of Japan in Manchuria. It had helped to shatter the Disarmament Conference, both by its refusal of the Soviet disarmament proposals and notably by its insistence on the retention of bombing aeroplanes. Lastly, while a signatory of the Versailles Treaty, the British Government had helped the rearmament of Germany for war against the provisions of Versailles and had then used the growing military power of Germany as an excuse for a swelling armaments programme in Britain. All of these and other steps besides had marked out British Imperialism as the wrecker of collective security. Why then was there this sudden change in the summer of 1935? The change, actually, was more apparent than real. But the appearance sufficed with the Trades Union Congress leaders, who lent their support to the Foreign Secretary without any exposure of the summer intrigues or previous guilt of the Government, thereby largely depriving the Labour Party of its chance of victory at the election.

Yet the reason for the apparent change should have been obvious. In the case of Manchukuo, British Imperialism's interests did not coincide with the application of the Covenant of the League of Nations. In the case of Abyssinia, British Imperialism's interests coincided with the application of the Covenant, or rather with a threat to apply the Covenant. The League of Nations, in this case, had suddenly become a strong card.

This fairly obvious explanation was perceived by Sir Stafford Cripps and others of the Socialist League; who then, however, proceeded to assume, first that the National Government would carry out what it so grandiloquently promised; second, that there were no other forces than the British Government in the League of Nations.

Then they drew the deduction that they must expose only the hidden purposes of the National Government and must abandon the far more striking exposure that would follow from forcing the National Government to carry out its pretensions. From this they went on to abandon the defence of Abyssinia against aggression, the massing of working-class forces to compel the stopping of the Italian war of aggression, and finally the possibility, so much insisted on by themselves a few months earlier, of using the League as an instrument for the maintenance of peace.

What are the interests of British imperialism which caused it to use the machinery of the League of Nations against Italy? It is not simply the question of Lake Tsana and the head waters of the Blue Nile, it is that an army of a quarter of a million soldiers on the Red Sea is a menace

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to the Middle Eastern Empire of Great Britain and, if that army were to conquer, the Abyssinian high lands would be a fastness dominating both the Middle Eastern Empire and the African Empire. The Middle Eastern Empire begins with the "independent sovereign state" of Egypt, with its British garrison, stretches through the mandated territories of Palestine, to the "independent state" of Iraq, with its British garrison and south into Arabia, with its subsidised potentates and so on to the British East Indies. The African Empire begins with Egypt and stretches south through British administered Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, thence through the British colonies of Uganda and Kenya to the mandated territory of Tanganyika where it touches Rhodesia and links up with the Union of South Africa. It is this which gives its strategic importance to the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea.

For over ten years Italian fascist propaganda has been busy against Britain in the Middle East, one of its notable successes being when Josiah Wedgewood, Labour ex-minister, declared that under certain circumstances Britain should hand over Egypt to Italy. When, instead of propaganda, there appeared a quarter of a million Italian troops in the Red Sea and simultaneously an army of sixty to seventy thousand Italian troops in Libya on the western flank of Egypt together with the fact that the naval base of Malta was more and more obviously accessible to air bombing from Italy, the danger began to be acute. The Mediterranean was filled with British ships in the month of August and British imperialism's connections with Greece, whose waters could provide the naval basis for the British fleet, were strengthened by the restoration of the monarchy.

The Middle Eastern Empire of Britain is made up of subject populations. The presence of another imperialism in the midst of that empire could stimulate colonial revolt. To guard against colonial revolt is the first object of British foreign policy in the Middle East: hence the attitude of Britain. The importance of this political strategic danger called forth the display of armed force in the Mediterranean and the utilisation of the League of Nations.

But the Middle East and its sea passage is also the route to the second great group of British foreign interests in the East Indies and the Far East. In the Far East (China and the Pacific) war was already begun with the seizure of Manchukuo and the carving up of China is under way. There the old policy of Britain was to use Japan as an ally against America. But as Japan the friend became stronger and more and more aggressive, and as the hope of seeing Japan and the U.S.S.R. embroiled in war was more and more frustrated by the peace policy of the U.S.S.R., the Far Eastern situation as a whole became more and more perplexing and menacing. Japanese imperialism instead of strictly

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confining itself to quarrelling with the U.S.S.R. has shown a strange disposition to seize the North of China to the great disadvantage of British interests. Even this last month the financial proposals made by Sir Leith Ross have been greeted with the utmost hostility by Japan. Therefore the problem has arisen as to whether some approach to America should not be made in order to curb " our old friend Japan." If America refuses, then, possibly a stronger British support of Japan might deflect Japanese armies northwards and away from British spheres of influence, to the Far Eastern Soviet borders. But, whichever policy be finally adopted one conclusion remains for British foreign policy, that the armed forces in the Far East must be strengthened. Hence the Singapore naval base will be rushed to completion and the new navy will be built.

The present foreign policy in the Far East is to prepare for all eventualities by an increase of armaments—which in turn increases the danger of war in the Pacific. But war in the Pacific means world war and world war involves the question of Europe.

The keynote to British foreign policy at the moment is in Europe. If British imperialism had no other object than the maintenance of world peace then it might seem obvious policy to link up with those powers who wish to stave off war against the warmongering powers—against Japan in the Far East, against Italy in the Middle East and against the German-Polish-Hungarian war group in Europe. But actually this is not the case, actually it is through British aid that fascist Germany has been able to rearm and prepare for war. What is the cause of this? The first stage of the answer is the British determination not to give France the hegemony of Europe.

British Imperialism and French Imperialism, joint victors of Versailles, are like two dogs tied to the same leash. They have common interests: they are strongly linked together: but within their common bond they quarrel ceaselessly.

Some years ago French imperialism held Germany clamped down by its chain of alliances extending from Belgium on the left flank through Austria, Czechoslovakia, and the Little Entente to Poland. This was supposed to give security to France in Europe, but from the British point of view gave domination to France. Earlier attempts of British imperialism to embroil France and America proved fruitless. Three years ago Britain learned, when the gold block broke down, that France would not antagonise America for the sake of Britain. Just as ten years earlier, Britain learned at the time of the Ruhr adventure, that the U.S.A. would do nothing in Europe to advantage Britain as against France. Therefore the raising of Germany to regain a balance of power in Europe became the object of British policy in spite of the enormous increase of the danger of war.

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It was this aim two and a half years ago which led to the Four Power Pact of Britain, France, Germany and Italy: and to the resistance of Britain throughout all this last year to the Franco-Soviet Pact.

What interest, it may be asked, had British imperialism in refusing to prevent war by methods of collective security in Europe, while making full use of the League of Nations to prevent or hamper war in Africa? Why should Britain's short term policy be one that (initially, at any rate, during the summer) went to the maintenance of peace, while its long term policy in Europe drives to war? First of all, the support of the League of Nations measures against Italian aggressive war did not deflect the main tendencies in British policy for which Europe is the key-note. Had it been only an Anglo-Italian conflict, the policy might have altered, but since Britain was moving with fifty other nations the Italian question could be reduced to one which necessitated only a temporary redisposition of the fleet and the air forces and could not affect the major tendencies in British policy.

British Imperialism wants neither an Italian victory nor an Abyssinian victory nor a revolution in Italy. It wants only to teach Mussolini a lesson.

The Long-Term Policy.

The second question is far more important; it affects the whole future peace of Europe and of the world. The Franco-Soviet pact is not in any sense a war alliance, it provides for any other power to enter it. The invitation is expressly made that Germany should enter it and it is, of course, open to Britain to do the same. Were these main powers of Europe to join this instrument of peace, war would be staved off for a long time in the future. Even as it is, the Franco-Soviet pact is such a bulwark for peace that the fascists inside France are carrying on the most determined campaign against it.

Why should British imperialism have striven during these last twelve months to break this pact? The reason lies deep in the traditional policy of the balance of power in Europe with Britain able to dip the scales one way or another. This policy disappears if collective security ensures peace through an expansion of the Franco-Soviet Pact to include the main European powers. Within such a grouping Britain ceases to be arbiter of Europe. The hegemony of France disappears it is true, but the hegemony of Britain does not take its place. Actually, the moral leadership of Europe passes to the U.S.S.R. Britain becomes one of the powers of Europe, no longer interfering from time to time, but continuously associated with the other powers in what could be then the main interest of Europe, the preservation of peace.

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But the main interests of British imperialism lie elsewhere. They lie in its Middle Eastern and African empires that bifurcate from Egypt, in the East Indies and the Far East, and throughout the seven seas. At what point may one or other of these widely scattered imperialist interests demand allies for Britain in Europe, allies who will stand with Britain in a war combination? The ideal map of Europe for Britain is not one in which the names of countries have written beneath them "member of collective security pact for peace," but one which would bind together Germany, France and Britain, to keep the peace as between themselves in Western Europe alone. Within such a grouping British imperialism is arbiter; while this triple grouping itself would be arbiter of Europe; and finally, could be used as the centre of a West European combination against the U.S.A. or the U.S.S.R.

It is this fact which furnishes the explanation of the moves of the last eighteen months, of the creation of an uncertainty in Europe which has caused the armaments race to go faster and faster. For a period through nineteen thirty-four, France hoped to gain the support of Britain for collective security. Germany plied the British foreign office from the opposite side. The *Times*, of the 6th of November, quotes: "a section of influential opinion" which hopes that Great Britain "will abandon collectivism and be amenable to an Anglo-German arrangement of much wider scope than the naval agreement."

But the moves of British diplomacy are now ripening to the disclosure of its own plan in comparison with which the Italian-Abyssinian war is regarded as a narrow issue. The first hints are given in the message from the *Times* correspondent from Geneva on the first day of last month:

> While the procedure of sanctions moves forward automatically, other and wider prospects engage the private attention of the ministers gathered at Geneva. . . . . If the Franco-Russian pact, to which Germany objects, is not ratified by the French Government, this would leave the door open for an entente between Great Britain, France and Germany, having as a condition the return of Germany to the League of Nations based on a "reformed" covenant detached from the Versailles Treaty.

The measure of British success so far is seen in Monsieur Laval's twisting and turning towards a secret arrangement between the French fascists and Hitler, and in his hostility to the Franco-Soviet pact.

Thus, at the very moment when Winston Churchill is thundering against Germany and using German rearmament as the reason for building a huge British navy at the expense of social services, the British Government press is disclosing the aim of the friendship policy with Germany to be a triple entente, a Franco-German-British entente. This they feel will solve all the doubts and questionings as to the future aims of Germany, this will ensure that the German guns will go off only towards the east.

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Two Policies.

What is the summing-up of this situation? The whole inhabited globe is on the eve of world war. Already Japanese imperialism and Italian imperialism have begun to wage war for the re-division of the world. Nazi Germany openly proclaims its intention of making war: and its allies in the West are already found. Its military alliance with Poland was further strengthened by the German-Polish Commercial Treaty, signed only last month (on November 4th, 1935); while earlier in the autumn Goering joined Polish and Hungarian statesmen in "a hunting party." These "huntsmen" were after a bigger quarry than small deer.

Amongst the powers other than these five there are many whose interest is to stave off war. What policies are before them? Two alternatives are presented: *either the method of collective security against aggression*, put forward above all by the Soviet Union; or the mysterious half-unfolded policy of British imperialism bound up with programmes of re-armament, both for Germany and for Britain, and claimed by Mr. Baldwin to be a method of preserving peace.

Two contrasting policies; the one summed up in the postulate of Maxim Litvinov that "*Peace is indivisible*": the other, in the phrase of British diplomacy, that "War must be localised." The one strives to maintain peace at every point: the other, admits war, but hopes to prevent its spread.

Let us examine whither British imperialism's policy is bound to lead, even as put forward by its own supporters and forgetting for the moment our analysis of the deeper policy that is not yet publicly disclosed—perhaps, as in 1914, not be disclosed till the very moment of war. War is "to be localised": that means peace is also to be "localised." Hence the Air Locarno plan, for keeping the peace in Western Europe between Britain, France and Germany; and letting others keep the peace in Eastern Europe—if they can. But actually such a military triple agreement, given that re-armed Nazi Germany is one of the trio, is bound at the same time to be an alliance against some other powers. Indeed, all dual or triple alliances to keep the peace have been alliances directed *against* some other power—unless it is free for other powers to enter. Surely, even on its own showing, such a policy would be bound to hasten the coming of war in the East of Europe.

Actually, however, apart from the formal differences between these two policies, we have already seen the deeper reasons for the main tendencies of British imperialist policy. Indeed, as regards the Baldwin Government's attitude to Germany and the U.S.S.R., this was already made plain twelve years ago. It was Baldwin's policy not to have friendly relations with the Soviets, but to let Germany make money by trading

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with the Soviets and then to squeeze reparations payments out of Germany —as was done in point of fact by the Dawes Plan of 1924-29. Now, once more, there are payments falling due as between Britain and Germany. Germany wants her colonies back. And Britain may be willing once more that business be transacted at Russia's expense and repay Germany with colonies carved out of the U.S.S.R.

Finally, the alternative policy of collective security is repugnant to British imperialism for several reasons. Not only would it rule out her project of a West European Entente against the U.S.S.R. or the U.S.A. This is its negative effect.

Positively, the preservation of peace in this way would enable the U.S.S.R. already the biggest new factor in world politics, to grow stronger and stronger: for socialism thrives on peace. It would also mean the weakening of the fascist countries: for Fascism is bound up with war.

The prospect of maintaining peace through collective security contains within it the prospect of social revolution in Germany and Italy: a prospect that comes nearer as the Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union grow stronger. Just the same reason, which made British imperialism a close accomplice of Tsarist Russia in the partition of Persia and preparation for war, makes it shun close relations with Soviet Russia. For though the capitalists of Britain may not immediately desire more territory, they wish to maintain their Empire with its exploitation at home and abroad. Therefore, because of its antagonism to the U.S.S.R., because of its basic conflict of interests with the U.S.A., because of its Empire, because of its whole capitalist class interests, British imperialism rejects collective security for peace and prepares the way for war.

Against this main tendency of British imperialist policy, the common action in this country of all the forces for peace can make great headway. For no modern war can be waged effectively if the mass of the people are opposed to it. But the conditions for this are first a united working class, to which all the forces for peace can rally: and second, a clear lead (such as was given by the Communist Party and by it alone on the Italian war) continuously applied to this rapidly changing pre-war situation.

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WHY WE BROKE WITH THE I.L.P.

By C. K. CULLEN

THE working-class struggle throughout the world has entered upon a new phase and, as so often before, the I.L.P. as a party shows itself unable to read the portents of the historical events taking place before their very eyes. For that reason and because the party leadership in almost every field of activity has embarked on a policy of deliberate obstruction to the building of working-class unity, so urgently necessary in face of the increasingly repressive measures of capitalism to-day, the Revolutionary Policy Committee and its supporters have decided with very few dissentients to leave the I.L.P. and make application to the Communist Party for membership.

It is interesting to recall the loud proclamations of the I.L.P. National Administrative Council (N.A.C.) at every Annual Conference in recent years that they were anxious to promote international working-class unity. Apparently, however, before they can agree to unity every other section must accept the I.L.P. line of policy. Let us consider one by one the main issues facing the workers.

We have just passed through a General Election. The National Government, born in August, 1931, out of Fear, by Economy Ramp, throughout its four years of life has served the interests of the big capitalists and financiers by forcing economies and wage-cuts on the workers, by putting the unemployed under the dictatorship of the U.A.B., and by instituting slave camps ; has prevented the re-housing of many thousands of slum-dwellers by stopping the housing subsidies ; has built up huge armaments (and still asks for more), enormously increased the Air Force, and spent thousands of pounds in developing new poison gases whilst it professed to have no money for improving education or giving a decent standard of living to the workers and unemployed ; has helped the development of Fascism in this country by protecting Mosley, by militarising the police, and by passing the Sedition Act to limit still further political freedom ; has helped Fascism abroad by supporting the re-arming of Germany, by its acquiescence in Japanese aggression in China and her threats against the Soviet Union, and by attempting to bargain with Mussolini for the division of Abyssinia. Itself a practical exponent of the most ruthless suppression of colonial races and their " pacification " by bombs, it poses as the protector of Abyssinia, as the staunch upholder of the Covenant of the League which it has so persistently flouted, and

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as the advocate of "peace with security." Its own spokesmen have warned the country that in the next four or five years we shall be faced with crises of increasing severity and that "strong government" is necessary. It is obvious that the attacks on the workers are to be intensified, that the ground is to be prepared more fully for the introduction of Fascism, and it is more than likely that the threatened attack by the Capitalist World on the Soviet Union will take place. The I.L.P. leaders see so little difference between a National Government of this character and a reformist Labour Government that our professors of unity proceed not only to divide the workers in as many constituencies as possible, but to carry on a violent anti-Labour campaign in the *New Leader*. The effect of this policy is not limited to the seats they contest: the damage done by their failure to assist in the consolidation of working-class forces and the actual discouragement of workers through their propaganda cannot be estimated. A little extra effort by a united working class could have smashed the National Government.

Perhaps the I.L.P. leaders will maintain that the principles of united front activity are not applicable to a general election at which each party puts forward its political programme not only for the present situation but for the more distant future. In a less critical phase of the struggle such a theory might be correct, but the dominant need of the working class to-day, revolutionary and reformist alike, is to smash the government of Hunger and War—a necessity which conditions the very nature of our future struggle. At a time when the capture of the offices of government—even within the machinery of bourgeois democracy—is of real *tactical* importance, our erstwhile parliamentarians suddenly learn that the control of parliament will not achieve the revolution.

The experiences of this election have proved beyond question that the attitude of the Communist Party on the other hand has secured real progress in breaking down the barriers which divided the reformist and the revolutionary workers. If the United Front can be achieved in this country the last big obstacle to international unity is removed. Again it is curious that those who talked loudest about international unity (though their method of seeking it was to denounce both the Second and Third Internationals impartially and to work for the formation of a new and "more revolutionary" International to contain "elements" from both) abandon their call for this unity just when it becomes a practical possibility and when both Internationals have recognised the common need of the workers to fight Fascist aggression directed at the moment against Abyssinia.

The National Council of the I.L.P., however, appears to be little more concerned than the National Government either with the independence of the Abyssinian people or with utilising the mass demands amongst all

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peoples for the application of the provisions for collective security through the League. With regard to the former, there is no difference in principle between the rival imperialisms of Italy and—Abyssinia. Even working-class action to stop supplies to Fascist Italy is contrary to official I.L.P. policy. As to the League, it is sometimes as convenient for the N.A.C. to quote Lenin as for the devil to quote scripture. That the most predatory Powers are no longer able freely to utilise the Thieves' Kitchen for the division of their booty or for the planning of further expeditions in search of plunder because of the presence of an energetic policeman supported by potential victims is of course a matter of little importance. One gathers that they think the policeman as an honest man has no right to be there. On the Abyssinian question, however, we have this partial consolation, that the London Divisional Conference passed with only four dissentients a resolution condemning the pacifism of the N.A.C.

One would think that such a National Council so anxious not to be involved in assisting the Abyssinians to preserve their independence lest we should be supporting imperialist war, would at least be grateful to the Soviet Union for her peace policy. Yet we find that the peace pacts of the Soviet Government and its foreign policy generally, designed to prevent the consolidation of a capitalist bloc and to postpone the outbreak of war while the workers build up their strength in other countries, amount in the estimation of the N.A.C. to a gross betrayal of the workers elsewhere merely in the national interests of the Soviet Union. For the past year or two, since in fact the Party Conference decided to approach the Communist International to enquire in what ways the I.L.P. could co-operate in our common objectives, a steady stream of hostile criticism and deliberate misrepresentation of the foreign policy of the Soviet Union has appeared in the *New Leader*, and no indication has been allowed to appear in the paper that any section of the Party objected to this editorial policy. We remember the affair of the Chinese Eastern Railway, when Brockway would apparently have liked the Soviet Union to reply to Japanese provocation by military measures. We remember the outcry against the terms of the agreement by which the U.S.A. officially "recognised" the Soviet Union: it was going to severely hamper the development and the activities of the Communist Party of the U.S.A. To-day, the American Communist Party has enormously increased its strength and influence. We remember the denunciations of the various peace pacts as military alliances, of the trade agreements with Germany and Italy (which, in fact, did nothing to bolster up Fascism in those countries as alleged, but were useful as bargaining weapons when dealing with other capitalist countries). On every possible occasion within the last two years, the official I.L.P. organ has sought to discredit the foreign policy of the government elected and supported by the workers of Russia, the representatives of our class in that section of the international field.

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It is no special credit to the I.L.P. that the achievements of the Soviet Union in building up her internal economy have been praised and held up as examples to admire: even sections of the capitalist press have from time to time been compelled to go far in that direction since the results are necessarily more concrete and cannot be hidden.

Brockway must have been well pleased with the results of his handiwork when the Derby Conference of 1935 went so far back on that of 1933 as to reject a resolution congratulating the Soviet Union on its tremendous achievements in the sphere of socialist construction and welcoming the peace policy and recognising it to be in the best interests of the working class throughout the world. At last Brockway could claim with some justification the right to pursue his line in the *New Leader* as "official" party policy.

Parallel with the distortions of Soviet policy, ran the consistent line of misrepresenting the objectives, the policy, and the tactics of the Communist International and its sections—one of the few consistencies of the official I.L.P. Instructed by the 1933 Conference to make the approach to the Comintern, though bitterly opposed to the decision, the N.A.C. sought every opportunity to find some alternative international policy which they could persuade the Party to accept. In 1933 they got a more or less casual endorsement for the continuation of friendly relations with the Independent Revolutionary parties on the Continent which were alleged to be in a very similar stage as the I.L.P. In 1934, the N.A.C., claiming that further negotiations with the C.I. had been rendered futile, persuaded conference to give first place in the international affections of the Party to the Seven Left Parties and merely to continue friendly co-operation as far as possible with the C.I. In 1935, the N.A.C. openly championed the now re-named "Bureau for Revolutionary Socialist Unity" as the chief hope of the working-class internationally and indicated willingness to continue the friendly co-operation with the C.I., and to accept "in principle" (whatever that might mean) any invitation to send a delegation to the Seventh World Congress, in order to put forward at that Congress the Party's views on international unity. Comrades who have read the correspondence between the C.I. and the I.L.P. will remember with some amusement the solemn questioning (by the N.A.C. of all people) as to the correct application of democratic centralism in the C.I. However, our guardians of democracy having cautiously, steadily, but successfully, used the Party machinery to sidetrack some of the less theoretically developed revolutionary enthusiasm of the Party, were now able to come out into the open with frontal attacks. McGovern's vicious attacks on the C.I. with his references to "Moscow gold," "Russian commercial travellers," and "a bogus international" were no mere accident: McGovern had also been selected by the N.A.C. at the York Conference in 1934 as their mouthpiece to make a denunciatory speech

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on the same subject, and his particular flair for such a task was fully appreciated by his sponsors, and although his disgraceful remarks were regarded as too damaging to the Party to be reported in the *New Leader* but were cordially welcomed in the *Blackshirt*, all efforts to get the N.A.C. to dissociate itself from them officially met with failure.

Enough has been said to show that the official attitude of the I.L.P. on these important aspects of working-class struggle is making collaboration with other sections of the workers practically impossible and efforts are being made in some quarters to terminate all joint action with the Communist Party.

Since this year's annual conference at Derby, a tremendous campaign has been waged to discredit the R.P.C, in the London Division. Aplin, who was the London organiser, resigned from his office, making a long statement of vague charges of disruption against the R.P.C. in general, but refusing to name any individual. Charges of anti-party conduct were also made by Aplin against the Divisional Council to the N.A.C., but strangely enough even the N.A.C. were unable to find sufficient evidence to substantiate them. Just before the Divisional Council elections an organised torrent of anti-R.P.C. contributions appeared in "Controversy," the internal party discussion organ, accompanied by one from the "impartial" editor. The only common line amongst our opponents was opposition to the R.P.C. They utilised any and every argument that could possibly create antagonism. Some objected to our using Communist lecturers for courses on Marxist philosophy, etc., some objected to our using the party machinery for the carrying out of our general policy, others objected apparently to our not doing it. Aplin, himself, standing as candidate for the chairmanship just managed to secure election with the help of the Trotskyists, who nevertheless regard him as having "no basis of political principle": at the same time, however, leading members of the R.P.C. were returned at the top of the poll for positions on the Divisional Council. This inconsistency on the part of the membership was even more strikingly shown at the subsequent Divisional Conference. Confused and misled by the official attacks on Communist and Labour Party policy and by the facile use of revolutionary slogans misapplied, and without a sufficient basis of revolutionary theory combined with practical experience, the Conference decided at one moment that the Communist International was "social-patriotic," and that common working with the Communists was impossible and a few minutes later resolved to set up permanent joint committees in the districts with the Communists; that the N.A.C.'s attitude to the Abyssinian situation was a wrong interpretation of the party policy on opposition to war adopted at Derby and must be ruthlessly exposed and opposed even at the special conference (open to outside bodies) to be held on the war question in December, and on the other hand it pledged itself loyally

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to carry out party policy as decided by annual conference *and as interpreted by the N.A.C.* It adopted an election policy governed not by the vitally important issue of working-class struggle against the National Government, but by the attitude of the candidates on the question of sanctions and decided to put up as many candidates as possible, whereas in fact it was not found possible for one reason or another to put up a single candidate in the London Division.

The R.P.C. itself had been divided a month previously on the question of sanctions, though fuller discussion had begun to clarify the issues and settle many of the doubts. The London Conference had the effect of consolidating the great majority of the R.P.C. supporters in a common realisation that in such a critical stage of the struggle as the present we could neither conscientiously attempt to build up the organisation and numerical strength of such a party nor submerge our loyalty to the working class in a false obedience to a policy which we regarded as dangerous to the working class.

In a sense we have been defeated in our main objective, the building of a United Communist Party to which the I.L.P. would and could have made an effective contribution as a party. But the attempt has not been useless. From the first we set ourselves an almost impossible task. Impressed by the success of our Russian comrades, influenced by the lessons of the historic struggle of the workers here in 1926, determined that our party should take its place in the actual daily struggle of the workers and not confine itself to dreaming of Utopias or an occasional spasmodic act of struggle, we attempted to train ourselves and the party in the theory and practice of revolutionary work as the only way of escape from the mad slaughter and destruction wrought by capitalism. We had little assistance, none in fact, from a party leadership almost completely isolated from the actual struggle, no encouragement towards the study of Marx and Lenin ; often enough we were met with rebuffs in the early stages from those with whom we sought common action in the fight. We had to use a machine completely unsuited to our task while striving to build another. We made mistakes and learnt ; we believe we also helped to teach.

We have not won the I.L.P. as a party, but the same sort of experiences which first banded us together as a group, which drove us on from one lesson to another, from one struggle to another, compelling us to realise there could be only one revolutionary party, one revolutionary international, that mistakes or no mistakes our place must be inside it—these same experiences will compel others to follow. As to the I.L.P. itself, it has no understanding of the rôle of the revolutionary party, no understanding of the laws of social progression, and apparently it seeks none. It lives each day in the world of yesterday, and borrowed and out-of-date slogans are its staple article of diet.

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WHY RANK AND FILE MOVEMENTS ?

By E. D. SHEEHAN

RANK-and File Movements, Vigilance Committees, etc., are not created by revolutionaries ; they come into being when the workers' militancy cannot find its true expression through the bureaucratic constitution of the official trade union.

Spontaneous rank-and-file movements are often generated around a particular question and are led by the most active and loyal members of the union ; when this particular question has been settled these most active members try to ride on this success and, perhaps usually because they do not see the way forward, lose the opportunity of giving the workers a further lead, so that the rank-and-file movement dies out.

Such rank-and-file movements are the result of the inability or unwillingness of the official trade union machine to provide leadership in the day-to-day struggle so that an alternative leadership is created.

If we examine the policy of the official leadership more closely the cause of rank-and-file movements becomes more clear.

The Mondist policy of the T.U.C. makes it necessary to keep the militancy of the workers in check. It is impossible for the unions to do this unless the official bureaucracy contains some concessions for the workers to justify its existence and maintain its influence.

Both the employers and the capitalist state realise this and co-operate with the official trade union leadership to grant just sufficient concessions to enable the trade union bureaucracy to maintain its influence and hold in check the militancy of the workers.

There are various types of concessions obtained in collaboration with the employer, the promise by the employer to assist the union in obtaining 100 per cent. membership naturally supported by all the members, union representation on disciplinary boards or courts, machinery for dealing with local complaints and even wage concessions. Such a concession was recently granted by a large undertaking in London which issued an order that " no collections can take place in a garage, depot or works, unless the application comes through the local Trade Union Branch."

The union officials find that they cannot justify their existence indefinitely by collaboration with the employer alone and seek the aid of the capitalist state machine. They endeavour to get legislation introduced into which wages and conditions clauses are inserted.

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Recent examples of this are: Road Traffic Act, Clause 19 and 93; Road and Rail Traffic Bill, Clause 14. Clause 19, Road Traffic Act, 1930, covers the hours of labour, and in a number of instances has actually produced a worse set of schedules, longer spread-overs, and irksome breaks or reliefs, but has been acclaimed by the Trade Union bureaucracy as a victory for organised labour. Clause 93, Road Traffic Act, 1930, is the Fair Wages Clause, and its operation if referred to the Industrial Court may result in the fixing of a low minimum rate of wages for a district or area. The official trade union leadership undoubtedly obtained considerable prestige from these Acts.

In Germany the trade unions were compelled to rely to a much greater extent than in this country on the direct intervention of the state in order to throttle the workers' militancy. This was a reflection on the one hand of the greater depth of the crisis in Germany, and on the other hand of the higher degree of monopoly in German industry. Dr. Franz Neumann, legal adviser to the German trade unions, in his book, *Trade Unionism, Democracy, Dictatorship*, published by the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee, says on pages 47-8:

> The Trade Union's appeal to the workers' vocational interests is unquestionably weakened by the increased activity of the State in the regulation of wages and conditions of employment.
>
> The Arbitration system, the legal extension of the collective wage bargaining agreements, etc., made it appear to the worker that he no longer had any need for the Trade Unions.
>
> If the State takes charge of all these things, what use are Trade Unions? This was the stock question in Germany.
>
> Owing to the constantly increasing State control of social life and the appearance of the State as an economic opponent, the number of strikes diminished.
>
> The number of forced interventions by the State into the industrial relations between employers and workers grew. For in a monopolistic economy every strike more or less affects the entire economic system and, thereby, also the State.
>
> Throughout 1931 the German Trade Unions did not declare a single offensive strike.
>
> A further important reason for this lies in the fact that the collectivist democracy binds the Trade Unions and the State closer together.
>
> True, the Trade Unions are independent and free; but this close contact leads the Trade Unions to develop a psychological attitude of dependence on the State.

We see here very clearly where the Mondist policy leads to, *i.e.*, to the greater and greater dependence of the trade unions on the capitalist state, and the more and more open use of state force against the workers.

The true significance of these words of Dr. Franz Neumann's should be thoroughly understood by all active workers, for then they will understand the cause and necessity for rank-and-file movements.

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When the workers in an industry or part of an industry are of the opinion that for certain reasons, *i.e.*, speed-up, increase in the cost of living, etc., they are justified in submitting demands for improvements in wages and conditions, and this determination cannot find its outlet through the bureaucratic channels of the official union, and cannot be appeased by any concessions which can be agreed to between the union bureaucracy and the employer or by legislation, the workers will form committees elected by the rank-and-file to break through the resistance of both employers and union officialdom. The new leadership elected by the rank-and-file in their effort to obtain justice becomes a true expression of the workers' militancy.

If the active members of this new rank and file movement are honest and understand the situation they will be able to hold the leadership, guiding the militancy and collecting the power of the organised workers to win big victories. Such victories over the employing class will expose the state machine as a tool of capitalism, undermine the class collaboration policy of the trade union bureaucracy and so establish trade union democracy.

So the trade unions can again become the most powerful weapons in the class struggle, led by the most able fighters for the working class, who will lead the workers not only to partial victories over the employers, but to becoming the owners of the means of production.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

A Psychologist to his Love. Edward Corse Scott, 52 pp. ; *Something to Say.* Edward Corse Scott, Ramsey, Isle of Man. 62 pp. 1s. each.

Three Sources of Unemployment. International Labour Office. (P. S. King and Son.) 166 pp. 5s.

The Life of Emmeline Pankhurst. Sylvia Pankhurst (T. Werner Laurie Ltd.) 180 pp. 3s. 6d.

Genetics and the Social Order. Mark Graubard. (To-morrow Publishers, New York City.) 127 pp. Paper, 2s. ; Cloth, 3s. 6d.

Inquest on Peace. Vigilantes. (Gollancz.) 367 pp. 3s. 6d.

Abyssinia and Italy. Emile Burns. (Gollancz.) 223 pp. 3s. 6d.

Reports of the 7th Congress of the Communist International : The Working Class in the Struggle Against Fascism. G. Dimitrov. 80 pp. 2d. *Reply to Discussion* (on the above). G. Dimitrov. 32 pp. 1d. *Concluding Address.* G. Dimitrov. 12 pp. 1d. *Report of the E.C.C.I. with Reply to Discussion.* W. Pieck. 86 pp. 3d. *The Preparations for War.* Ercoli. 2d. *The Victory of Socialism in the U.S.S.R.* D. Manuilsky. 29 pp. 2d. *Report to Active Members of the Moscow Organisation on the 7th Congress.* D. Manuilsky. 2d. *Engels in the Struggle for Revolutionary Marxism.* D. Manuilsky. 29 pp. 2d. *The Youth.* O. Kuusinen. 15 pp. 2d. *The Colonial Peoples.* Wan Min. 2d. *Resolutions and Decisions.* 40 pp. 2d. *The Fight for the People's Front in France.* Marcel Cachin. 15 pp. 1d. *The Successes of the Anti-Fascist United Front.* M. Thorez. 37 pp. 2d. (Modern Books Ltd.)

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HENRI BARBUSSE

Herald of the Workers' United Front against Imperialist War and Fascism

By ANDRÉ MARTY[1]

HENRI BARBUSSE ! One of those great names whose mere mention drew huge crowds of workers. After Marcel Cachin, he was the most popular of our revolutionary leaders in France. Barbusse symbolised the tremendous change which has been taking place amongst the best of the intellectual circles of France, that is to say, their orientation towards the cause of the revolutionary liberation of the proletariat.

Barbusse was born on the 17th of May, 1873, at Asnières (Seine), an important town in the red suburbs of Paris, where the proletariat, full of fiery ardour, is right face to face with open reaction. His father came from Gard, and his mother, who died a few years after his birth, was English.

While he was still very young, Barbusse was making a living by journalism. He began by writing short articles for various papers. After getting his degree in philosophy he started writing poetry. His first works, *Les Suppliants* (1903) and *L'Enfer* (1908)[2] expressed the pessimism of a man unable to find a solution to the contradictions surrounding him. They were imbued with an individualist idealism which isolated each personality and made of the individual the vital centre of everything. He was caught up by the war. Flung headlong with millions of others into the imperialist carnage, his individualist shell was broken. Thrown, as he was, into contact with the masses, Barbusse remained amongst them.

Like so many others, the imperialist butchery of 1914-1918 transformed him from a humanitarian individualist into an active fighter for the revolution. The complete change that came over him was a new and striking confirmation of Marxism. In his *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx said :

> It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness. —(Kerr Edition, 1904. Author's Preface, pp. 11-12.)

[1]André Marty was the leader of the famous Black Sea Mutiny in the French Fleet which occurred in 1919. Imprisoned numerous times for his revolutionary activity, Comrade Marty is now a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party and a member of the Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

[2]Published in English under the title of *Inferno*.

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The Author of " Under Fire " face to face with the Imperialist War

Henri Barbusse had been exempted from military service and, for reasons of health, he had been put in the auxiliary forces. When there burst forth the storm of August, 1914, Barbusse was convinced, like many of those around him, that Germany was the one and only imperialist and militarist country ; besides, he believed that a German victory would irremediably shackle the development and progress of social ideas. He believed that the imperialist enemies of Germany were indeed the representatives of liberty and democracy. That is why, though he was actually in an auxiliary corps, he transferred to the infantry as a private. He went to the front in December with his regiment, the 231st infantry. He went through the murderous defeat of the Aisne, then through Soissons, then Artois in 1915. Stricken with dysentry and enteric, he was invalided three times from the front, and finally discharged with a pension. In his enthusiasm for liberty he had behaved with great courage ; he had been twice mentioned in despatches, once in those of the Brigade and once in the Army's, the first time for saving wounded who had fallen in front of the lines, and the second time for " volunteering for all dangerous missions."

But it was not the same Henri Barbusse who returned to civil life ; the war had passed over him.

All the press, all the magazines were extolling the great massacre solely in the interests of the imperialists. Military dictatorship was rife. And the united Socialist Party had not only been carried away by the current, but was urging the working class into the massacre.

We were a tiny minority in France, a few isolated men in the trade unions, in the Socialist Party, in regiments and in the factories, confusedly resisting, and seeking the way out. The " Committee for the Resumption of International Relations "[3] had scarcely been established. It was 1915.

And then a man dared to break through the official lies, dared to tell the truth.

It was Henri Barbusse.

It was 1916. Amidst the frenzy of Chauvinism, worse in France than anywhere else, *Le Feu ; Journal d'une escouade*,[4] stood out as the accuser of the scribes on the pay-roll of Schneider and Krupp. The veil of lies was rent. The terrible realism of war was laid bare. Strikingly, Barbusse, the ex-infantryman, voiced the suffering and hate of thousands of soldiers.

The old French song which had been adapted with revolutionary words and set to a popular tune, was on the lips of the millions in the regiments. It ran :

[3]See note below on page 754 relating to the " Committee of the Third International."
[4]Published in English under the title of *Under Fire, The Story of a Squad.*"

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> Those who've got the cash will remain since it's for them we are being slaughtered. But that's finished now, for the Tommies are all coming out on strike.

And the refrain "We're all Condemned" became:

> Its your turn, Big-belly, to go up the line. If you want to make war, then pay for it with your own skin. (A song of Craonne.)

The book was so powerful that it immediately drew together all the scattered forces who were struggling in the dark, and gave them a new and vigorous impulse.

> It reminds me of a morning in hospital in a little Breton village where I had been invalided. I happened to see an instalment of this novel of whose existence and author I had never heard. The instalment passed from bed to bed. At last, such were these soldiers' thoughts, here was one who knew, and who dared to tell the truth.
>
> A breath of something extraordinary had stirred the deep quiet peace of the narrow street, with its sound of church bells. (*République*, August 31, 1935.)

It is easily understandable. To confront all the bourgeois and socialist journals which we used to call *Les bourreurs de crâne* (the dope press), there suddenly appears a living picture of what imperialist war really means.

Read, for example, the passage "22nd. Attention: Shoulder arms!" that superb picture which shows a company dragged brutally out of their dugouts where they had been spinning splendid dreams of life, and hurled straight into the attack, to death. How different from Epinal's pictures in *L'Illustration*.

It was in 1915 when *Le Feu* was written. *L'Oeuvre*, a petty-bourgeois paper, published it serially in 1916. But it was not till 1917 that it reached the masses to any great extent.

Then 1917! the red year!

The winter of 1916-1917 had been terribly hard. Behind the lines with the high cost of living, and wages but a fraction of what they had been in 1914, a wave of strikes began in the munition factories. At the front, defeat followed defeat, at the cost of pile upon pile of corpses. And over all this passed the breath of the Russian Revolution; in February, the overthrow of autocracy, the rise of the mass movement, the birth of the Soviets, the establishment of soldiers' committees, the great voice of Lenin. Then came the 16th of April, and the mad assault on the Chemin des Dames; 80,000 killed in two days, five armies, more than a hundred regiments, 300,000 soldiers in open revolt, the battle of Soissons against two mutinous regiments marching on Paris.

What tremendous hope roused us even in the remotest of factories, in regiments stationed in the most distant spots and right down in the holds of the battleships.

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How clearly Barbusse had explained our feelings ! Since Zola with his *Germinal*, no French writer had so clearly identified himself with the masses. Barbusse had learnt how to descend from his ivory tower to understand the people and to explain their feelings, he had come out of the deadly labyrinth of individualism to become a gifted worker in the cause of the liberation of humanity through socialism.

The great success of *Le Feu* is due to the fact that it so well expresses the feelings of revolt which were stirring among the soldiers and workers of France. Never had a novel in France had such a success. Lenin himself stresses that it showed the growing revolutionary consciousness of the masses. How right he was ! Remember the words of Corporal Bertrand :

> "And for all that, mind you," Bertrand went on, "there is one figure that has risen above the war and will blaze with the beauty and strength of his courage. . . . ."
>
> I listened, leaning on a stick and towards him, drinking in the voice that came in the twilight silence from the lips that so rarely spoke. He cried with a clear voice—
>
> " Liebknecht ! "
>
> He stood up with his arms still crossed. His face as profoundly serious as a statue's, drooped upon his chest. But he emerged once again from his marble muteness to repeat : " The future, the future ! the work of the future will be to wipe out the present, to wipe it out more than we can imagine, to wipe it out like something abominable and shameful." (*Under Fire* pp. 256-7. Dent edition, 1933.)

And because *Le Feu* so well expresses the feelings of the soldiers in all the imperialist armies, it has had a similar success throughout the whole world.

Quite recently, Barbusse did not know the number of editions in foreign languages, which his book had run into, but he thought it must be at least fifty.

In September, 1918, Henri Barbusse published *Clarté*[5] as a sequel to *Le Feu*, a work which shows the transformation of a man with the " average psychology of a petty bourgeois " into an internationalist. *Clarté* was followed by *Paroles d'un Combattant*, a collection of articles and speeches published in 1920.

The Fighter for the Workers' Cause

But what has given Barbusse his particular greatness among French writers is the fact that his literary work is inseparable from his social work. Indeed, it is certainly the latter which has made him such a great revolutionary writer, because he was a man who struggled, who fought for the workers' cause.

[5]Published in English under the title of *Light*.

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Barbusse came into the socialist movement via the path of pacifism. He believed that a pacifist attitude could prevent war !

But under bombardments, in the mud of the trenches with his comrades of the 231st regiment, he listened to the voice of the fitter and the agricultural worker in uniform and understood. He came to understand the mechanism of capitalist society, and as a consequence he realised that " sanctimonious pacifism " was merely a wild dream. He understood that to fight war, you must attack its cause, that is, the capitalist régime itself.

But he also knew that it was not enough to propagate his ideas, it was necessary to become organised for the struggle. With Raymond Lefebvre[6] Georges Bruyère[7], and Vaillant-Couturier[8], Barbusse founded the Republican Association of Ex-Soldiers (A.R.A.C.), formed for the express purpose of " waging war on war to avert for future generations the horrors, massacres and catastrophies of which they had been witnesses," and also to defend the rights of those who survived the war.

The ideology of the A.R.A.C. was naturally very confused. Its founders believed that the pacifist proposals of Woodrow Wilson might lead to peace, proposals which masked the interests of American imperialism, yet at the same time they considered that it was only a transformation of the régime that would safeguard peace.

After the armistice of the 11th November, 1918, the A.R.A.C. began to make a membership drive, and at the same time to arrange for an international congress of ex-soldiers. This propaganda was undertaken on similar lines as that of the " Committee of the III. International."[9] The A.R.A.C. played at this time a foremost political rôle in helping the local Socialist Parties[10] to pass over to a real revolutionary position.

Barbusse was the organiser of the two successive international congresses—that at Geneva in 1920, and that at Vienna in 1921—which set up the Ex-Soldiers' International. The aim was to reunite in this International ex-soldiers who had been but lately fighting each other, in order to foster throughout the world an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist spirit which would be favourable to the public welfare, and to the general interests of the workers.

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[6]Raymond Lefebvre with leanings towards communism was a delegate to the II. Congress of the Communist International ; with Vergeat and Lepetit, drowned in the White Sea on his return from Soviet Russia.

[7]Died of consumption in 1922.

[8]Member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party.

[9]This was a committee inside the French Socialist Party of a minority group, but which at the Tours Congress in December, 1920, secured a majority for affiliation to the Third (Communist) International. During the war (following Zimmerwald) it had functioned as the " Committee for the Resumption of International Relations."

[10]The equivalent of the Local Labour Parties here.

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But the ex-soldier understood that the real revolutionary struggle necessitated one further step. In January, 1923, the military occupation of the Ruhr by French imperialism placed us within an ace of war. The Poincaré Government struck a severe blow against our party, the Communist Party, by arresting its Political Bureau and charging its members with plotting against the external safety of the State. An opportunist wing led by Frossard deserted the struggle and tried to split the Party. It was then that Barbusse came to understand, and he became a member of the Communist Party.

In the article which he published in *L'Humanité*, he wrote :

> Let us rally unreservedly to this party, this scientific centralisation, this structure which already reflects by its cohesion, its living chain of forces, something of the life of the future, which has its ramifications everywhere, and whose great heart beats in a great country, so real and so new.

It was in this way that the writer of *Le Feu*, the organiser of the ex-soldiers, became a member of the world-wide army of communism.

The Enemy of Fascism and the Friend of the Soviet Union

1924. French imperialism, fattened on the excess profits that its victory in 1918 had brought it, entered into a period of relative stability. Barbusse put all his efforts into aiding those stricken by the White terror ; he strove to defend those people oppressed by fascist and reactionary governments. At the end of 1925 he carried out an investigation in the Balkans. He founded numerous defence committees which did successful work. It was at this time that he published *Les Borreaux*, that damning accusation against fascist barbarity.

The atrocities which he saw committed against the victims of the White terror made him a pitiless adversary of fascism. When eight years later, Hitlerism began its bloody era, Barbusse in speech and in writings struggled to organise the masses to snatch Dimitrov from the clutches of the Nazi brutes, to make known the great figure of Thaelmann, and to save him also.

But at the same time, Barbusse was studying the new world, the land of socialism, and pointing out its example to the workers. As a result of his travels in the Soviet Union, he wrote *Voici ce qu'on a fait de la Georgie* and *Russie*,[11] talented and vigorous descriptions of the liberation of the national minorities by the power of the Soviets and the ceaseless progress of socialist society in construction.

As always he organised as well as wrote. He was one of the founders of the Friends of the Soviet Union, of which he became the president.

[11]Published in English under the title of *One looks at Russia*.

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The Pioneer of Unity

This is his greatest, his most glorious title. It was May, 1932. Barbusse published his *J'Accuse* unmasking Tardieu's monstrous accusation that the Bolsheviks were behind Gorgulov, the assassin of President Doumer. But at the same time he saw the growing menace of war, particularly against the Soviet Union. It was then that, together with Romain Rolland, he announced on the 27th of May, 1932, the idea of a great international rally against war. Our party, our International, supported this initiative with all their power. The Second International, on the other hand, forbade its organisations to take part.

The organisers declared the aims of the congress thus :

> The congress shall undertake the task of giving a precise analysis of the present situation, to confront the masses with the realities which threaten them, and to organise the workers solidly around the socialist fatherland which is now in danger.

In preparation for the Congress great activity was developed throughout France ; conferences, factory meetings, district congresses were held ; intensive work for united action among the pacifist organisations and trade unions and in the Socialist Party was carried out. At the meetings for the election of delegates to this congress at Amsterdam, the first steps towards the achievement of the united front were made. At the Congress (27-29th August, 1932), the delegates were divided up as follows :

French delegates, 527 in all ; 200 delegates from the C.G.T.U. (the Red Unions), 15 delegates from the C.G.T. (the Reformist Unions), 40 peasants, 15 co-operators, 33 delegates from workers' municipalities, more than 20 socialists (S.F.I.O[12]) delegates.

The total number of delegates was 2,200, representing 30 million people belonging to 29 nations ; 347 socialists, of whom 291 were members of the Labour and Socialist International.

The Socialist delegates adopted the following declaration :

> We 291 comrades, members of the Second International, delegates of various organisations to the Rolland-Barbusse congress of the 27-29th August, regret the absence of the leaders of the Labour and Socialist International at this historic international demonstration. We hereby decide to work with energy to bring about inside our respective sections the establishment of a united front against war and for the defence of the Russian Revolution.
>
> We consider that war will only be rendered impossible by the overthrow of capitalism. We are opposed to all ideas of national defence under capitalism.
>
> Should the efforts of the working class, united against imperialist war, be unable to prevent its outbreak, we pledge ourselves to do all in our

[12]French Socialist Party affiliated to the Labour and Socialist International and similar to the Labour Party in this country.

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> power to transform this war into a class war, for the seizure of power by the workers and peasants.
>
> Furthermore, we express our willingness to work ceaselessly for the liberation of the oppressed peoples.

The C.A.P. (the Executive) of the Socialist Party, at its meeting on the 7th September, 1932, threatened the Socialists who had been present at Amsterdam and invited its districts to take statutory action against those members who had remained on the committees of Amsterdam.

Despite these threats, at the beginning of 1933, there were 3 districts, 140 branches, and 800 members of the Socialist Party in the Amsterdam movement in France.

It was from this great movement that the United Front came, which, thanks to our party, checked the attempt at a Fascist coup in France in February, 1934.[13]

The People's Front.

It was this Amsterdam movement, also, which laid the first foundations for the setting up of the mighty People's Front in France.

With what joy, with what confidence for the future, Barbusse marched at the head of the unforgettable 14th of July demonstration in Paris, in which he rightly saw the fruits of his labours.

The great merit of Barbusse in the realisation of the People's Front does not lie solely in his founding of the Amsterdam movement, which had resulted in the formation of the united front. It lies also in his efforts to unite intellectual and manual workers into one great family. At all times he attempted to remove the bias and prejudice which prevented many clear-sighted and upright intellectuals from joining the great revolutionary cause.

At the anti-war congress at Amsterdam, which he rightly saw as the instrument of this union, he had declared:

> The intellectuals must become the supporters of the idea of collective activity. It is of vital interest for them that they should understand the masses and their mode of living. Alone the masses, both in the towns and in the country, with their common needs and desires are a guarantee not only of social progress, but also human and intellectual progress.

Already immediately after the war, when Barbusse had founded the *Clarté* Group, he set as its task the bringing closer together of the intellectuals to the working-class movement. With the same object in view, he founded the review *Monde* in 1928. Its rôle has been considerable in the formation of a single fighting front of manual and intellectual workers. And that is why for years we struggled against the

[13] For the pledge adopted at Amsterdam, see the pamphlet *United Front Against War*, published by the British delegation to the World Anti-War Congress.

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many attempts that were made to wrest *Monde* out of the hands of Barbusse.

Barbusse it was again who was one of the initiators of the recent congress for the defence of Culture, which drew to Paris some of the most famous men and women of world literature. He who had played a considerable part in the formation of the Association of Revolutionary Writers and Artists in France, fought now to group the anti-fascist writers of the whole world into a vast defensive front, to prevent culture from foundering in the mediæval barbarity of fascism.

If, at this time, many sincere intellectuals have joined the Peoples Front, alongside workers and peasants, to fight for bread, liberty and peace, it is primarily to Barbusse that we owe this. This work will always be connected with his name.

"*Stalin*"—*the New Dawn*

The last literary act of this fighter, this champion of true culture, was his book: *Stalin.*

He wanted not only to make known our leader of genius of the world revolution. His aim also was to describe the path trodden by that immense population of 170,000,000 people who, thanks to the Bolshevik Party, are now the vanguard of human progress, and are showing to all the sole path to their liberation. "There are two worlds," Barbusse wrote: "The socialist world and the capitalist world."

For a long time Barbusse was one of the most ardent, most talented fighters among the soldiers of the socialist world. He put himself behind Stalin, the helmsman who is steering the working class to victory.

> The man at the wheel who watches over you, and who works for you, the man with a scholar's mind, a workman's face and the dress of a private soldier.
>
> He is a man of iron. The name by which he is known describes it: the word Stalin means "steel" in Russian. He is as strong and yet as flexible as steel. His power lies in his formidable intelligence, the breadth of his knowledge, the amazing orderliness of his mind, his passion for precision, his inexorable spirit of progress, the rapidity, sureness and intensity of his decisions, his constant care to choose the right men . . . . it is in Stalin more than anyone else that the thoughts and words of Lenin are to be found. He is the Lenin of to-day.
>
> There are no other expedients for the submerged, for the threatened, for the damned than revolutionary expedients since it was middle-class tyranny that began by counter-revolution as a preventive measure. The counter-revolutionaries have on their side the control of arms, of the public services and are able to lie on the wireless. The revolutionaries have on their side the fact that they "are right." The struggle to come will be a conclusive one. (p. 297, 289-290 and 285 of the English translation, published by John Lane.)

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With such a chief Barbusse was sure of the future.

Henri Barbusse died in Moscow in the capital of the fatherland of the workers of the whole world. He died, worn out by illness, a few days after the close of the 7th Congress of the Communist International, whose discussions he had passionately followed and whose decisions he had wholeheartedly approved. We recall the appearance of Barbusse on the rostrum in the Congress, greeted by the representatives of more than 60 countries. We recall the warm hand-shake which he exchanged with Dimitrov.

Though he was already ill he told me more than once how tremendous the work of unity seemed to him, the work of this rallying of all the popular forces of the 7th Congress of the Communist International. He described to me how tremendous the consequences would be.

The Man of the Masses

Barbusse, a modest man, never sought popularity like so many intelectuals who call themselves revolutionaries. But the workers loved him for his work.

His tall, stooping figure, his sad-featured face were well-known not only to the French workers who crowded to meetings to hear him speak and to see him beside them in their demonstrations, but also to workers in Europe and America where he had gone on behalf of ex-soldiers, for the defence of victims of the White terror, or to rally the masses against fascism and war. His name was pronounced with fervour by prisoners in fascist gaols who knew of his efforts to defend and liberate them. His face was quickly recognised in the streets of Moscow, of Kharkov, of Tiflis where the builders of socialism greeted this great friend of the Soviet Union.

But it is in France that his popularity was greatest. The workers knew that despite his weak state of health, Henri Barbusse would never draw back from any task and would never spare his energies. They loved him ardently.

On the 14th of July last he stayed for five hours perched on the top of the taxi over which fluttered the flag of the *Front Populaire*, bareheaded under the burning sun. Hundreds of workers came up: "Tell Barbusse," they said, "to put his hat on, he will get ill." He obstinately refused. I insisted in vain, "I cannot cover my head," he replied with enthusiasm, "before the passing people."

This deep love on the part of the people of France and particularly of Paris we have just had born in upon us in the most decisive of ways. Listen to *L'Humanité* of the 7th September, our glorious *Humanité*, which Barbusse called the ex-soldiers to defend in August, 1929, when the Tardieu Government tried to muzzle it:

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" From midday the people streamed to that coffin. In the afternoon we proceeded along the Rue de Lancry, passed the canal, up the Rue de la Grange-aux-Belles. Isolated groups of mourners walk along beside us. Others are coming away. Trade Union badges and the star of Amsterdam are in many buttonholes. We hear snatches of talk about him, about *Le Feu*, of a meeting, of the friendly word of a comrade who was as fraternal as he was good. . . .

" A young woman mechanically follows the wall and tears flow without shame from her eyes.

" One elbows a group of navvies, a delegation ; then two young men, their brief cases under their arms, teachers. Over the uneven cobbles of the way which leads to the *Maison des Syndicats* (Trade Union House), old men and children find difficulty in mixing their hesitating steps with the rest of the crowd.

" Stewards organise the continual flow of new arrivals. It is five o'clock. It has been like this since noon, and soon when people come out of the factories and shops, about six o'clock, the flow will be even denser.

" It is in this that one can see the deep attachment which the people had for the Communist writer. The variety of this moved and solemn crowd testifies to it.

" A delegation from a building job, with corduroy trousers and black or blue blouses ; postmen in uniform, bus conductors with their satchels, electricians and plumbers with bags of tools on their backs, telegraph boys, factory workers who have come straight from work, students with books in their hands, errand boys and draymen with leather aprons, men and women of all ages and all walks of life . . . .

" You come nearer the coffin. And you are attracted by the gaze of one looking down on you. It is the portrait of Henri Barbusse placed above the coffin.

" The picture is that which was hung outside the funeral wagon during the journey from the Soviet Union. It is surrounded by the inscription, " A last farewell to you, Henri Barbusse, great friend of the Soviet people and the workers of the whole world.

" It was in front of this portrait that the farewell speeches were made, notably that of Comrade Stassova. It is before him that you are now walking beside a rough companion who nervously pulls at his moustache, and a young woman carrying her baby. Behind limps a war victim. We pass, we salute with raised fists, our eyes fill with tears ; and an old mother with white hair leaves the ranks. She places a bunch of flowers among the others, which accumulate between the wreaths.

" The wreaths are arriving more numerous and completely surround the coffin . . . .

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" Now the crowd flows on continually. A few women, as they pass, make the sign of the cross, between two Red Front salutes. Humble bunches of flowers are added to the mountain of wreaths. Sometimes, in a broken voice, an ex-soldier murmurs ' Goodbye, my comrade.'

" The family of our comrade, a group of sorrowful women before the coffin, follow with visible emotion at the profound homage of the people of Paris for their dead comrade.

" Among the people passing suddenly one catches sight of a Republican guard ; he marches in his rank in full uniform dignified in his sorrow.

" A little later two policemen, who went past in plain clothes, come back to bring their donation towards the Barbusse monument.

" Among the delegations is that of the Left Parties of the Paris City Council. They include Paul Fleurot, Leroux, Schneid, Duteil and our comrades Bossus, Frot, Auguet, Gresa.

" Half-past five. Six o'clock. Seven o'clock. The flow of people accelerates and the ranks are double, trebled. It is knocking-off time."

The people of Paris have accompanied him to the Père Lachaise, to the cemetery where the last Communards fell, rifle in hand. These masses to which he belonged, whom he loved, for whom he worked to free from capitalist slavery, solemnly swore over his tomb to remain united against fascism and war, in the way he had always advocated.

What was Barbusse ?

Our great Comrade Stalin sums it up exactly in his telegram to *L'Humanité*, and to Cachin, Thorez and Vaillant Couturier :

> I share your sorrow at the death of our friend, the friend of the working class, that worthy son of the French people, that friend of the workers in the struggle against imperialist war and fascism, Comrade Henri Barbusse.
>
> May his life, his struggle, his aims and aspirations be an example to the young generation of workers of all countries in the struggle for the liberation of mankind from capitalist slavery.—J. Stalin.

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THE APPLICATION OF SANCTIONS

[*We give below a criticism by J. B. Figgins of the Comment of the* LABOUR MONTHLY'S *Editorial Board on an article by him entitled "The Margate Trades Union Congress": both the article and the comment were published in the October issue (pp. 629-637). The reply of the Editorial Board to this criticism is appended.*]

THE reply of the Editorial Board to my criticism of their line of making demands on the National Government to impose sanctions seems to me contrary to Marxist-Leninism, and if persisted in will be incalculably disastrous to the revolutionary movement in this country, in addition to further weakening the international solidarity of labour, the only real safeguard against war and for the establishment of World Peace. It is our foremost duty to-day to strengthen the international solidarity of labour and it is manifestly absurd to think that it can be done by propaganda in favour of action by an Imperialist Government. While capitalist imperialism controls our national and international life, the actions of our Government will be determined by what it conceives to be in the interests of our own imperialists and the capitalist system of society.

"But," say the Editorial Board, "the 'sanctions policy' mobilises the movement to make positive peace demands upon it (National Government) to struggle against it, and thus to bring it down." This is simply shutting one's eyes to the facts. The "sanctions policy" does not mobilise the movement to bring down the Government. It strengthens and consolidates it. A supporter of the National Government finding Liberals, Labour and Communists supporting sanctions naturally feels confirmed in his faith in the National Government and the latter, taking advantage of the glorious opportunity made for them by their opponents declares for a General Election now, and capitalises the testimonial so very stupidly given. The possibility of a Labour Government vanishes completely and the National Government is returned to power. What are these positive peace demands? Independence of Abyssinia. The British people sympathise with the Abyssinians, but it is lip sympathy. It may be regrettable, but there it is, an indisputable fact. It is this basic fact that governs everything else. It permits the National Government to carry through its policy of giving Italy concessions at the expense of Abyssinia, so long as British Imperialist interests are safeguarded under the pretence of doing so in the interests of the League and Peace. The National Government has not even considered it necessary to hide the fact that it will do a deal at the expense of Abyssinia, neither have the dominant Powers in the League, where the Committee's Report agreeing to same was accepted, with Russia and a few others abstaining from voting, and, with this knowledge, the League afterwards imposes sanctions to which none of the powers can be blind, will most probably result in a settlement at the expense and in violation of the independence of Abyssinia.

As for the other effective demand, namely, of forcing the National Government to line up with the Peace States in the League in opposing Mussolini's war by means of effective sanctions, the Editorial Board is surely not serious. It is the other way about. The so-called Peace States have no real power either economically or militarily, and therefore cannot act as a driving force. Russia does not yet possess the requisite naval, aerial and military means to permit of her assuming that rôle. No, the power of real initiative resides in Britain and the so-called peace states only toe the line (abstain from voting) in response to Britain's call. That is all that has happened up to the present and all that will happen. Britain demonstrated her economic power in the formation of the "Sterling Bloc." Does any one challenge that she has not the power and is demonstrating it on the political and diplomatic field now as a result of this and her predominant naval power? That is why I said: "The (the British capitalists) don't believe themselves so impotent as to be incapable of successfully defending their interests, preferably by idealising their action through the League . . . . . without giving any guarantee to act against an aggressor in a European war." Since then they have definitely refused to give this guarantee, and therefore I was right in adding: "Thus they retain their full

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freedom to support Germany against Russia, so do not let the opposition deceive themselves that in supporting sanctions they are protecting Russia."

And since sanctions under these circumstances will only be imposed to the extent necessary to protect British interests and not for the destruction of Italian imperialism, but the spoliation of Abyssinia which even according to the Editorial Board's theory will encourage German imperialism, who will say I was wrong in adding: "it is quite possible if not probable, they are doing the exact opposite."

But say the opposition and the Editorial Board, and it is this that determines the matter ultimately for most of my friends: "Is it not clear that if Mussolini is strongly opposed by the League States, Hitler will hesitate, while if Mussolini gets a free hand, Hitler will be encouraged." This argument is really absolute nonsense. Here one is asked to have the child-like faith of misguided League enthusiasts, and to believe everything is settled at the League according to the principle of doing everything to preserve peace, and not according to the interests of the powers assembled; and, what is more important to us, according to their class interests. Unfortunately, we still live in class society. Is there one Communist will challenge the soundness of this contention that it is one thing for Britain to mobilise the League in her favour and quite another for Russia to do so? And in face of the difficulties we have seen powerfully economic, political, naval and capitalist Britain encounter who is there still left who believes the League could be mobilised to protect Soviet Russia against imperialist Germany? It is a monstrous and criminal illusion. Encouragement, does anyone believe it is encouragement Hitler lacks in face of Britain's obvious support? What economic sanction would be useful in face of Britain's opposition in case of Hitler's attack on Soviet Russia? It is, therefore, surely obvious it is not encouragement he lacks, but power.

And my last word is this one quotation from Lenin as space forbids that I quote extensively from his *Collapse of the Second International*, wherein he smashed long ago all the sophistical present-day arguments, but this one meets the whole argument entirely with the reinforced logic of deepened and intensified capitalist contradictions and growth of Soviet Power since he wrote these historic words: "It is particularly necessary to warn the people against an assertion of the capitalists which has led astray from time to time the timid elements and the petty bourgeoisie, it is affirmed that, in the eventuality of our breaking our alliance with them, the English and other capitalists could deal a serious blow to the Russian Revolution. This assertion is utterly false, because the 'financial support of the Allies,' in that it enriches the bankers, 'supports' the workers and peasants in exactly the same way as the gallows supports its victim. Russia has enough corn, coal, oil, iron, and it will suffice to rid the people of the big proprietors and of the plundering capitalists to be able to assure the fair re-division of these products. As for the event of a military action being let loose against the Russian people by her present allies, it is manifestly absurd to suppose the French and Italians could join forces with the Germans and launch them against Russia, since it is she who has proposed a just peace. Then even if England, America and Japan declare war on Russia (which would be very difficult for them owing to the unpopularity of such a war as well as the divergence of interest which divides them on the question of the distribution of Asia, and particularly the plundering of China), they could only cause Russia the hundredth part of the affliction and distress caused by the war with Germany, Austria and Turkey." (Preparing for Revolt. Pages 4-5.)

That is the correct policy to-day, acknowledge that the divergence of interests of the imperialist powers makes it possible for Russia, not only successfully to defend herself, but to rally the support of the workers and oppressed of all lands to turn any war against her into the world social revolution; propaganda which instils confidence in their ranks of the certainty of victory is the correct and only method of maintaining peace and what is more important, which will make communism the objective and not peace.

Now then my good comrades of the Editorial Board, what have you to say to that?

J. B. FIGGINS.

A REPLY

Comrade Figgins is gracefully circling round the main point of controversy without ever coming near it. The point in dispute is should the working class movement be prepared to utilise the contradictions between the imperialists as part of its struggle in defence of Abyssinia?

We say as part of its struggle advisedly, because the working-class movement must by its own actions (demonstrations to Italian Consulates; stoppage of those supplies not on the sanctions list; the

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rendering of aid to the anti-Fascist fighters in Italy) do everything in its power to impede the Fascist war of aggression.

But the working class cannot shirk the issue that is raised by the war situation, namely, what line of action we can take in relation to our own Government.

Here we have in the League to-day the Soviet Union, which is in favour of applying sanctions in such a way as will raise the utmost obstacles in the way of the aggressor. A large number of other League States are (for their own good capitalist reasons and not because they are out and out supporters of the League, or because they are tools of British imperialism) in favour of restraining Mussolini. For what line of action should we mobilise the masses, in order to bring pressure on the British Government?

Should we demand that the British Government stand aside and give Mussolini a free hand (this is the line of Garvin, Amery, and a large section of the Tory Party, not to speak of the Mosley Fascists. It is the line supported for quite other reasons by the I.L.P. and the Socialist League)?

Should we give unconditional support to the line of the National Government with its policy of applying sanctions in order to force Italy to conclude a thieves' bargain? (This is the line of the T.U.C. which emphatically refused to criticise the general warlike policy of the National Government, and to expose its specific warlike aims in Abyssinia.)

Or should we, while demanding support of the peace powers in the League and of sanctions, expose the National Government and seek to mobilise the masses against its war policy? That is the line of the LABOUR MONTHLY.

Figgins' position concretely is that in the conflict that is going on within British imperialism, we should (using all manner of Socialist phrases, of course) objectively come down on the side of those elements of British imperialism who want a free hand for Mussolini. That we should demand that the British Government: (1) Should oppose the putting of an embargo on credits to Italy; (2) That it should oppose the putting of an embargo on war materials to Italy; and (3) that it should oppose an embargo on Italian imports.

Now obviously these sanctions are imperfect. Obviously, they required to be supplemented by working-class action. But why in the name of all that is wonderful should we oppose them?

As far as we can judge from Comrade Figgins' statement, the answer is—because British imperialism is supporting the League and is applying sanctions for its own dirty imperialist purposes. Of course it is. Nevertheless, the sanctions policy objectively helps Abyssinia, while the no sanctions policy delivers Abyssinia over to the Fascist butchers. Surely, the correct line is to impede the Fascist butchers by independent working-class action and by sanctions and to mobilise the peace-loving masses to impede the British imperialists in their policy of a thieves' bargain.

But, argues Figgins, this will strengthen the National Government by creating the illusion that it is applying sanctions to maintain peace. On the contrary it is the line which opposes sanctions which gives the National Government the maximum opportunity to pretend to stand for peace. It at once isolates its supporters from those masses who want to see Mussolini checked. The line of support of sanctions combined with the exposure of the Government is that best calculated to win the peace-loving masses to our side.

We have made it clear that the capitalist powers in the League are acting in accordance with their own interests. It is equally in accordance with their interests to hold Hitler in check. That is why League action against Mussolini will deter Hitler.

But, argues Figgins, British imperialism can conceivably to-morrow support Hitler in a war against the Soviet Union. It can, but the mobilisation of the masses for effective action against Mussolini can create such a situation as will render this more difficult.

And does Figgins mean to say that if the Soviet Union were attacked that it would not be our duty—as part of a wide campaign—to fight so that the British Governments stands by the League Covenant and supports the application of economic and military sanctions against the aggressor. Is it not our duty now to do all in our power to break British imperialist "friendship" with Germany. We say "Yes" and deny that there can be any other answer consistent with working-class internationalism. It is clear, on the other hand, that the no-sanctions policy means a free hand for British as well as Italian imperialism.

The plain meaning of the quotation from Lenin is evident. It is that the Russian workers could take power in their own hands and could utilise the imperialist contradictions in order to maintain power. That was done, is still being done, by the Soviet Union.

But it is the contention of Comrade Figgins in his two contributions that such contradictions cannot be utilised by the Soviet Union or by the working class generally. The quotation from Lenin does not support Figgins. It refutes him.

EDITORIAL BOARD.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE POLITICS OF THE FASCIST WAR.

Abyssinia and Italy. Emile Burns. Gollancz. 3s. 6d. net.

Inquest on Peace. By "Vigilantes." Gollancz. 3s. 6d. net.

IN *Abyssinia and Italy* the author has written a much-needed as well as a timely booklet. We are given a remarkably clear and precise account of the historical background to the present war, a chapter on the essentials of imperialism which underly such colonial rivalries, and also a summary of the recent stages of the dispute at Geneva and the record of the British Government at the League. While it will afford everyone a compact summary of events in a convenient form, it is especially the book for the bewildered and the enquirer—for that ordinary newspaper-reader, with little interest ordinarily in politics, still less in theories of them, who yet is stirred and puzzled by the present situation and wants to know what it is all about. For the book is written with that clarity and plausibility we have learned to expect from the author, and in an even, matter-of-fact tone which carries conviction.

Moreover, it does not only give us information: it also answers a number of pressing questions in a very sensible and reasoned way. One may specially mention the much-needed treatment of the relation between alleged "over-population" and colonial expansion, and of the question of "raw material resources," the problem of which the author puts in its true perspective. Finally, in two concluding chapters the debate in the Labour Movement over the League and sanctions is not only discussed, but questions, both central and incidental, to the debate faced up to convincingly. For instance, the question: "Has the League changed?" which has been on many lips during the debate, is answered "both yes and no." What is of special interest at the moment is the remark that the official Labour Party policy of identifying its own line with that of the British Government played into the hands of the National Government in springing its election upon the country—a fact which has no little importance in the light of the election results.

This defect in the Labour Party's election equipment, the second book, by the authors of *The New Statesman* pamphlet on Abyssinia, attempts to repair. It forcefully carries the attack into the enemy's camp and is a detailed and documented exposure of the record of the National Government in foreign policy. As such it is a remarkable book at the price, and is a significant improvement on most previous Labour Party pronouncements on foreign affairs. In a closely reasoned case, deftly put together with an effect of adding fact to fact and citation to citation which is overwhelming, the record of the Government itself is shown as a primary cause of the present crisis. The book is the "meatier" of the two; but while its profusion of quotation from documents and speeches makes it dullish reading in parts, it forms an invaluable source-book for student and speaker alike, and constitutes an important and vivid piece of critical contemporary history. Moreover, the authors are to be congratulated on the fact that they do not content themselves with recording facts on the political surface of events: they make an attempt to relate these facts to deeper causes which lie in the nature of capitalism itself. They point out the importance in the present conflict of the fact that it is a Fascist State which is involved. They expose the rôle which the National Government has played in encouraging the rearmament of Germany; and they leave no illusions about the imminent danger of an anti-Soviet *bloc* under the ægis of an Anglo-German *rapprochement*. At the same time the book has some significant weaknesses, symbolised perhaps in the fact that the book closes with a quotation from the late Arthur Henderson which is

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vague and rhetorical, speaking, as one would expect from his source, not in terms of concrete working-class activities, but of "a policy of heroic measures," "a League based on social justice," "a big and bold foreign policy," etc. The League is treated too little to concrete analysis, and too much treated—despite occasional critical phrases—as some transcendent piece of machinery in which it is only necessary to believe for it to achieve the good and the desirable.

The tardy change of tone of the British Government at Geneva in the autumn is somewhat uncritically assumed to have been a reflection of the force of "public opinion" (as expressed in the Peace Ballot) at home. True, the authors treat this as only one of the two dominant causes of the British decision to use the League machinery to restrain Italy; and, true, the mobilisation of mass opinion both in Britain and France, was an important factor in the situation. But facts suggest that it was not the dominant immediate cause; and at any rate the influence it exerted was not a simple and mechanical one. In the way in which the authors formulate the matter, the impression is given that it is possible for the actions of the League and of a Government to "reflect public opinion" even under capitalism.

Indeed, a clinging to old social-democratic traditions is apparent in their treatment of the State throughout: while it is commendably emphasised with examples that democracy is "distorted" by the "pressure" of capitalist interests, the implication is present that this is occasional rather than persistent, epidemic rather than chronic, and that *all* that is necessary is to place "honest Socialists" in ministerial chairs for the existing State machinery to recover its pristine chastity. Probably it is as a logical twin to this conception that in the concluding chapters the struggle against war is conceived as too exclusively electoral and parliamentarian; and hardly at all as a persistent and continuous mobilisation of popular opinion and action and of mass pressure against the State machine. Finally, and perhaps inevitably, the culpability of the official Labour Party and T.U.C. in allowing its support of League sanctions to appear as support of the Government, with consequent division in the ranks and a spiking of its guns in the electoral fight is glossed over.

But these are finer points of criticism in a book which we can welcome, and welcome among other reasons as a sign of new tendencies inside the ranks of the Labour Party itself.

M. H. Dobb.

AMERICAN CAPITALISM ANALYSED.

The Decline of American Capitalism. By Lewis Corey. (Bodley Head.) 15s. net.

"PRECISELY because it is the most highly developed, American industry offers the fullest confirmation of the analysis Karl Marx made of the laws of capitalist production. It is one of the tasks of this book, using the American statistical material, the most abundant in the world, to make a quantitative, as well as a qualitative, demonstration of the Marxist conception of the fundamental aspects of capitalism . . . ." writes Mr. Corey. His American publisher claims that "here for the first time the Marxian critique of capitalist economy has been inductively applied to the development of American capitalism . . ."

While it is not true to claim Mr. Corey as the first to apply the science of Marxism to the development of American capitalist economy, it is certainly true to say of America in the second year of Roosevelt that here for the first time bourgeois publishing houses are publishing as a good commercial proposition the works of middle-class intellectuals who with a greater or lesser degree of justification can claim to be Marxists. Further, that middle-class critics, while, of course, not agreeing with this or that, are writing of these works in high terms of praise.

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This is hardly surprising in view of the fact that a considerable section of the American middle class, finding that capitalism has no further use for them (*e.g.*, 250,000 teachers are at present unemployed, while over three million children of school age are not in school), are rejecting the old "onward and upward" liberalism and looking for a more realistic interpretation of world events.

In a book of over 600 pages, rich in statistical material and admirably documented, Mr. Corey analyses the development of capitalist accumulation in the U.S.A. from its early days, through the post civil war period of rapid growth, to the final stage of capitalist monopoly, when ownership and management have become completely separate functions and control is in the hands of a purely predatory finance oligarchy—(J. P. Morgan & Co. are shown as controlling directly or indirectly 22 per cent. of the total U.S. corporate assets).

The post-war period of "prosperity" is shown by Mr. Corey as a period pregnant with crisis, when the contradiction between production forces and the capitalist market was assuming ever vaster proportions, when a monstrous accumulation of wealth at one pole was accompanied by increasing misery at the other. (Total income reported by persons with incomes of $10,000 and up rose 114 per cent. between 1920 and 1928, while the wage workers' share in the national income fell in the same period from more than 40 per cent. to 34.3 per cent., and "the absolute number of unemployed workers in the prosperity years, 1923-29, was greater than in the 1907-08 depression.")

As a Marxist critique of the decline of capitalism, Mr. Corey's book is by no means faultless. He has weakened his argument by mixing with the Marxist theory of crisis the mechanical concept of "exhaustion of the long-time factors of expansion" (by which he means "mechanisation of old industries, development of new industries and industrialisation of new regions"). The cause of this "exhaustion" is not explained.

In fact, development of fresh investment outlets, offsetting the fall in the rate of profit caused by the ever higher composition of capital, is arrested *not* by automatically declining mechanisation, but by the development of monopoly capital itself. Industrial and financial monopolies are able to maintain prices even during depression, thus preventing a large-scale write off of capital, which would make possible considerable new expansion. In foreign countries other monopolies are already in sole possession of the field, and one-sixth of the world (U.S.S.R.) is closed to capitalist exploitation.

The last section of Mr. Corey's book—"The Struggle for Power"—is the weakest. Here he tends to become abstract and vague. The fact that he does not deal concretely with the day-to-day struggle and the rôle of the Communist Party (there is only one brief reference to the great strikes of the past two years) would lead one to assume that he has not clearly seen the revolutionary process as a dialectic unity, quantity passing into quality, partial struggles leading up to complete seizure of power. Rather he appears to view the communist revolution as "one far off, divine event."

Nonetheless, in its exposure of some of the realities behind the prosperity ballyhoo of the 'twenties and the present Roosevelt ballyhoo, and especially in its wealth of statistical and factual material, the book is valuable.

F. M. R.

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